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Children as researchers: a case study of an initiative in one primary school

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Abstract

This study describes a research project undertaken in an English primary school with Year 5 children where, over two years, children were trained as researchers and then undertook their own research projects looking into a variety of issues they identified within school. Its practitioner-led nature allows for an examination of the diverse positions I undertook whilst conducting the research: headteacher, teacher, doctoral researcher, co-researcher and supervisor of the children's research. The research is based upon an interpretivist framework and can be located within the literatures of 'participation' and 'pupil voice' and, more specifically, 'children as researchers'.

Case study methods are used to both examine and assess the impact and value of the initiative. Through the written recording of observations, structured and unstructured questioning and on-going encounters between me and children, the developing capacity of children as researchers, including their limitations, is described and analysed along with the potential wider benefits. The long-term nature of this study offers a contrast with many similar, short-term, projects allowing data to be collected over time to support the emergent nature of ideas as the study progressed.

With a central research question of 'What happens when children are encouraged to be researchers?', this case study examines and analyses the children's responses to the data collection methods used, the data collected, and the presentation of their findings, in order to highlight the conditions required for a successful project; whilst also identifying difficulties. In this respect it offers an insight for other practitioners looking to recreate similar situations. It further highlights the conflicts faced by an insider researcher, the roles and relationships between me and children and between children, both within the research group and with their respondents. The implications are analysed in relation to Foucault's notion of power, being situated within a complex web of relations, rather than as simply oppositional forces.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Overview

The aim of this study is to explore and investigate the features involved in children being trained as, and then encouraged to be, researchers and undertaking their own research within a primary school. It examines the feasibility of such an approach and the use of different methods, techniques and tools for use with and by children, in carrying out their research. Furthermore, it analyses my position as a researcher and headteacher and the roles I assumed in this study. Within this, the study examines the challenges and conflicts that arise as an outcome of the multi-faceted aspect of this adult role and scrutinizes the power relations in such a process.

The overarching research question explored in this study is 'What happens when children are encouraged to be researchers?' Through my involvement and the observation of this initiative, a range of sub-issues arise. In order to gain a better understanding of children undertaking research and the roles an adult can play in the process, the following sub-questions are also explored in the study:

- What do children need to know and do to be researchers?
- Are children able to conduct their own research?
- What can children learn from being researchers?

The thesis also considers the 'insider researcher' role and the part relationships play in the whole process, which leads to the following additional questions being considered:

- What is the relationship between children and the adult researcher (where that researcher is the headteacher) working with them?
- How does a headteacher reconcile their different roles when conducting research in a school within which they work?

1.2 Rationale

In the wake of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989), the English school system has witnessed a mixed response to the emergence of a 'participation' agenda, including that of 'pupil voice' (Tisdall & Punch, 2012; Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). This has been coupled with changes in the ways in which children are viewed with regard to research (Alderson, 2009; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2009; Qvortrup, 1994). This recognition of rights has been accompanied by a rights-based participation agenda (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012; Lundy, 2007), as well as calls for development of greater democracy (Fielding, 2011; Fielding & Moss, 2010). However, much of this participation work has generally taken place within the context of school improvement and has often been promoted along such lines. In this sense, there is a danger that it can become an adult-led agenda, with adult dominance in power relations constraining what children are genuinely able to contribute (Robinson & Taylor, 2012). An element that has developed within this has been that of children conducting their own research (Bucknall, 2012; Kellett, 2005). This has offered a potential alternative, with Bucknall's (2012) model of factors impacting upon children as researchers providing a significant step in helping acquire an increased understanding of such work. Within this context, I felt it would be a significant contribution to the literature to take an approach similar to the models of the latter examples and teach children the research skills to be able to carry out their own research, but also to provide a case study examination of the process. The focus was not intentionally upon school improvement, although the direction taken by children linked closely to this theme.

My research journey en route to the final study, moved through a number of adjustments, particularly in the initial stages, as I regularly re-assessed my study until a clearer pathway began to emerge. My initial intention was to investigate Years 4-6 primary school children's perspectives, understanding and awareness of their own learning. This would have involved me taking on the role of sole inside researcher,

using methods such as observations and interviews to conduct the research. In this case the children would have been seen simply as subjects in the process, meaning fairly limited involvement. At this point my proposal was to answer the following main questions:

- How do pupils view the learning experience?
- How can the learning experience be improved through taking account of 'pupil-voice'?

I made the change to focus on children taking on the role of researchers quite early in the process, although I still envisaged being in control of the research and working with children under my direction; in this respect it would have been very much an adult-led approach. My concentration at this point was still mainly on identifying ways in which the learning experience could be improved for children in school. It was only with further reading that I discovered the idea of children being trained in the skills of research and being empowered to undertake their own studies. This idea appealed to me and I decided to change the course of my research and follow this route. As a result, the aims of my work became focused more on the feasibility of developing children as researchers, the use of different methods, techniques and tools for use with and by children in carrying out the research and in assessing the potential for those methods. As such, the following aims emerged as particularly relevant:

- To develop children as researchers and enable them to carry out their own research
- To examine the role of power relations in such a process
- To examine my own multi-role position within the process

Furthermore, one of the most difficult issues during the study was the reconciliation of the varied roles I had to undertake, particularly when coupled with my position of 'insider' within the organization. At different times these roles included:

- Headteacher

- Doctoral researcher
- Co-researcher
- Supervisor
- Teacher

As the research process progressed, the management of these roles began to emerge as an increasingly significant area upon which to focus my attention. With particular regard to my role of headteacher, the exercise of power, increasingly played a role in the study. Whilst embarking upon the research, although I envisaged that the power element involved would need to be examined, I do not believe I fully appreciated the extent to which the power relations within a primary school could exert influence over what happened therein. As headteacher, I felt it was important that children were given some freedoms to carry out their work and that any findings should be recognized. My aim was to give the children a clear purpose and make their work relevant. I believed it was important that the children involved, felt they had a genuine voice with which to express their views. In this respect, one of my key roles was to provide not only a point of contact, but also a conduit through which their findings could be given prominence.

Throughout the thesis, all the data presented by children is in the form they provided and their writing is included verbatim with no amendments for spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors. All names have been changed in order to protect the identity of participants.

1.3 Context - the school

Hilltop Primary is a two-form entry primary school with around 470 pupils located in a metropolitan borough, with widespread deprivation, in the West Midlands. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010 shows this borough to be the 12th most deprived local authority in England, out of a total of 326. Hilltop is a larger school than the national average and is a popular school locally, being regularly over-subscribed. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds (76.4%), although the number of minority

ethnic pupils has increased from 12.2% to 23.6% between 2006 and 2012. The school serves an area with an extremely diverse socio-economic mix with 55% of children coming from families in the lowest socio-economic band identified under IDACI¹, although 10% of children come from families in the highest band. Furthermore 22% of children attract Pupil Premium funding. Few children start school with appropriate levels of communication, language and literacy for their age and most pupils arrive in nursery well below the average expected for their age in all areas of learning. Its last Ofsted inspection, in June 2013, described the school as 'outstanding.'

1.4 Personal context

I have been the headteacher at Hilltop since January 2002, inheriting a school that was described, by its then local authority adviser, as being ready for special measures. The school has been through three Ofsted inspections during that time and throughout this research process the spectre of the latest visit was hanging over the school, with five years and four months elapsing between the last two visits. I am certain that this added considerable pressure to activities within school, particularly given the nature of very short notice inspections and the need to be constantly prepared for such an instance.

As headteacher, Ofsted acknowledged I had my focus on improving the learning for every pupil in school through a relentless drive to improve the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils. I also work as a National Leader of Education, and have supported other schools in their removal from 'special measures.' Whilst it would be fair to say that as a head I am more interested in doing what I feel is right for the children in school, than in what an external agency think is right for the school, the agenda of external accountability cannot be ignored as inspection outcomes are still important and affect many things, including the employability of the head.

¹ IDACI - The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) is an index of deprivation used in the United Kingdom calculated by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and measures in a local area the proportion of children under the age of 16 that live in low income households.

My position as headteacher means my own personal context and views are inextricably linked to the vision and ethos of the school, with my own individual philosophies regarding learning being key factors in determining the direction in which the school is moving. Having undertaken previous Open University study, including unit E 836 Learning, Curriculum and Assessment, I believe I have developed a definite viewpoint with regard to how I feel children learn best and how a school should operate to ensure learning takes place. Whilst making no claims as to this being either the right or only way, this position doubtless has an effect upon the context in which this research takes place.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The following section offers an outline of how changed views of childhood and the emergence of a participation agenda have transformed children's involvement with research. It also provides an examination of the associated development of a wide-ranging, if imprecise, 'student voice' platform, thus setting the context for a more specific review of children taking on the role of researchers themselves. Within this, policy and practice are analysed along with proposed models of participation and accompanying issues. In this respect the literature links to my key research questions regarding children as researchers and does not seek to examine the much wider subject of children's involvement in research. Underlying all these developments is the pervasive factor of power, which is considered as a separate section.

2.2 Changing views of childhood

During the 1980s and 1990s critiques of previously held theories regarding children saw the emergence of childhood studies as a distinct discipline and brought with it a significant change in the ways children were viewed from a research viewpoint (Corsaro, 2005; James & James, 2004; James & Prout, 1997; Qvortrup, 1994). Qvortrup (1994, p.2) made the link between a social view of children as 'human becomings' rather than 'human beings' with the outcome of the former resulting in the exclusion of children:

...adulthood is regarded as the goal and end-point of individual development or perhaps even the very meaning of a person's childhood... This attitude, while perceiving childhood as a moratorium and a preparatory phase, thus confirms postulates about children as 'naturally' incompetent and incapable.

Within this view Tisdall (2012, p,182) claims that adults were seen as 'mature, rational and competent,' whilst children were simply going through a process of social

completion on the road to becoming adult. She further asserts that such interpretations led children to be seen as 'lacking rationality and competence and although they required protection they had no claim to rights' (p.182). As a result of their abilities and capacities lacking recognition, they were left at the margins of society and therefore, unable to contribute as full citizens. Emerging from these studies has been a reassessment of the status attached to children with childhood being recognised as socially constructed and children beginning to be seen as social actors in their own right rather than inert beings dependent upon adults. Given the long established and continued power relations between adults and children in schools, such enlightened views of children may not be seen, by some, as appropriate. My research however, engages with this important reassessment of childhood in that it views children as creative and, with appropriate support and encouragement, capable of taking the lead.

Within the realms of research, Woodhead & Faulkner (2009) point to a long-held, traditional, view which identified children as experimental subjects and subject to adult constructions of childhood. They continue to chart a developmental process in which children are increasingly seen as participants in research, with their status moving from that of a separated social group until, more recently, their own perspectives were finally sought. In this regard, Percy-Smith & Thomas (2010) point to the growing tendency towards children and young people's participation in decision-making with regard to their own lives and those of their peers, citing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989) as a major influence on this process. Indeed, Woodhead (2010, p.xx) called this 'the most significant milestone for development of current child policies, globally.' This created a collection of 54 articles which highlighted the extensive rights of children, redefining their status, covering social, economic, civil and political areas. In addition, the key right to have an active voice in decision-making was also asserted, predominantly through Article 12, which states:

Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the

views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Tisdall & Punch (2012, p.257) claim this range of coverage, coupling consideration of children's views, whilst maintaining the prominence of a child's best interests, provides a balance between 'participation and welfare (and) vulnerability and agency.'

Whilst widespread worldwide ratification commits states to implementing those rights and being held to account for doing so, there are a number of criticisms levelled against it. Amongst others, Tisdall & Punch (2012) highlight the irony in the fact that its development failed to include children and young people, in accordance with its own Article 12. Furthermore, the views of childhood around which it was created were dominated by Minority World countries and as a result takes a Minority World focus. Another claim laid against it is that it was so widely ratified because it lacked teeth in terms of enforceability. The UNCRC is monitored by a UN compliance committee and each member state submits a 5-yearly report on the implementation process. However, whilst this committee receives reports, requests information and questions government representatives, there are no strict international enforcement mechanisms with the only recourse being potential embarrassment through a negative committee report. Even then the impact can be questioned, for example, the UK government has submitted three such reports and UN responses illustrate a lack of compliance from the UK. Payne (2009) highlights the fact that the 1994 report received 36 recommendations for improvement, yet the third report in 2007 received 124. So it seems that, despite the plethora of legislation, over time the UK seems to have moved further away from complying with the UNCRC, rather than getting closer to achieving it. Although this leads one to question whether or not this legislation is reflective of a genuine response to the UNCRC or merely a further extension of 'nanny state' government, it is of course, important always to examine its impact and compare the intent with actual practice. Finally, like many international conventions, the wording of the UNCRC allows for a range of interpretation at best and manipulation at worst.

2.3 Participation

The increased recognition, based upon the grounding principles of the UNCRC, of children as being active in the moulding of their own lives has seen a development in child participation practice, research and theory. With regard to participation, Hill et al (2004) distinguish it from consultation and qualify the two in the following ways:

- participation means the direct involvement of children in decision-making about matters that affect their lives, whether individually or collectively.
- consultation is about seeking views, normally at the initiative of the decision-makers. (p.83)

For Woodhead (2010, p.xxi) one of the biggest challenges with regard to participation is the concept of participation itself. Whilst he claims it can be an attractive prospect, it is at the same time 'far too bland'. He feels it should be about more than adults simply involving children to have a say but should require active citizenship, being prepared to accept confrontation and challenge to adult authority. This could be seen as controversial, especially in schools where, as I have stated, adults tend to hold on firmly to their authority and power. He goes on to point out that whilst embracing 'child-centred, child-enabling and child-empowering values is one thing, putting them into practice is quite another (p. xxi).' It would require a significant change in widespread policy to fully reflect this approach and any change is likely to be incremental with small steps, such as those outlined in this thesis, hopefully contributing to the process.

Woodhead also cites a need for:

- appropriate methods.
- a clearly expounded conceptual framework, rather than an over-reliance on simplistic models, such as participation ladders.
- an acknowledgment that children's participation does not lessen adults' roles and responsibilities, but actually amplifies the challenge to support participation effectively and appropriately, respecting children's situation and capacities.

This latter point proved particularly relevant for my study and the way I attempted to conduct my interactions with children, raising as it does the importance of the role of adults in such work. It is further reflected by Stoecklin (2013) who identifies the recently adopted Council of Europe's (COE) Recommendation on the Participation of Children and Young People under the Age of 18 as a significant step towards the development of a collective viewpoint. Significantly, this includes involvement in decision-making rather than just consultation and states:

Participation is about individuals and groups of individuals having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to freely express their views, to be heard and to contribute to decision making on matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. (COE, 2012)

Moves to address pupil participation seem to be following in the wake of research and growing practice related to parent voice. Models of parental involvement, such as the widely referenced Epstein Model (2009), generally outline ways in which family involvement in education can be promoted. However, as Bower & Griffin (2011) claim, many of these models, whilst proclaiming to empower parents to have a voice within schools, are still often reliant upon the school directing the strategies to be used at home. McKenna & Millen (2013, p.11) extend this notion to suggest that 'many current home-school engagement practices seem predicated on the notion that parents do not naturally operate in ways that are caring and involved for their children.' They feel that a prevalent belief amongst educators, is that they need to 'teach' parents how to be involved, whilst seeing them simply as support tools for the school, rather than as participants in a mutual partnership. Unsurprisingly this approach they claim, actually works against engagement, arguing that for engagement to be successful then it 'must include two central components: parent voice and parent presence.' In some ways this element seems to mirror that of issues relating to pupil participation and voice, outlined below. Whilst looking at the way in which school professionals have sought to involve

others in their work, one might also ask, why it is that parental involvement is a forerunner of pupil involvement, especially when the children are the ones closest to the professional practice? Perhaps this is due to parental involvement in a child's education being positively associated with a child's academic performance, or parents being viewed as gatekeepers and consequently more important stakeholders. It may simply be that parents fall into the category of having made it to adulthood, whereas children have not and are thus relegated to a secondary status.

2.4 Student voice

More specifically, in the field of education, much of this participation agenda has been reflected in the developmental research of Rudduck & McIntyre (2007), Fielding & Bragg (2003), Flutter & Rudduck (2004) and Rudduck & Flutter (2004). This work aimed to make learning more effective, meaningful and enjoyable by taking account of children's views and their perceptions of pedagogic experiences, falling under the all-encompassing umbrella of 'student voice.' In a somewhat unfortunate and unhelpful manner this phrase has become a generic banner for a broad range of practices and also encompasses a range of terms, which are often interchangeable, including 'pupil voice' and 'learner voice'. Consequently, the term 'student voice' itself is highly debated with Fielding (2009, p.102) suggesting it is a 'portmanteau term', carrying as it does different ideas (and potentially some baggage with the different associations).

Thomson (2011, p.19) goes as far as to question whether it has any relevant meaning at all, referring to it as an 'empty jug' into which competing meanings can be poured for a variety of purposes. Lundy (2007) even suggests the use of phrases such as 'pupil voice,' have the potential to diminish impact, as they provide a rather conservative and limited view of what is required for the complete application of Article 12. For her full implementation requires children to be involved at all stages of the decision-making that impact upon them in Britain's schools. She claims that 'voice' activities do not necessarily represent an incontestable good and recommends a more critical approach be taken when analysing the ways in which children are asked to participate. Despite

these issues and potential negatives Czerniawski & Kidd (2011, p.xxxv) claim that student voice represents 'something rather special in the field of education' whilst the diversity of practice is what makes the movement so exciting. They also assert that all too often the educational practice relating to student voice remains invisible, with teacher and learner voices being dominated by those of academics and policy-makers.

Policy and practice

The ratification of the UNCRC in the UK was followed by legislative change and consequent policy change. Payne (2009) argues that the vast bulk of this change was focused on structural issues and, in regard to schools, led to greater accountability being demanded, especially through the inspection regime. She further argues that change has focused too heavily on service provision and has, in the main, been led by adults. In this respect she suggests the UNCRC has not really provided a starting point for policy development, but has been added on almost as an afterthought.

Whitty & Wisby (2007) outline policy development in relation to pupil voice beginning with the key changes which were enshrined in the 1989 Children Act. This made it a legal requirement that young people be consulted and involved in decisions that affected them. The 2002 Education Act provided further support for pupil voice, arguing for wider discussion between children and staff, pinpointing the potential for enhanced school improvement through such approaches. The 2004 Children Act stipulated that local children's services should reflect the needs of those children and that good levels of participation should be encouraged through the design and delivery of services. Although this provided for the creation of the Office of the Children's Commissioner with its main purpose being to give children a voice in public life, the implications were still for an adult-driven agenda. Furthermore, the 2005 Ofsted framework for inspection of schools included the expectation that schools would systematically seek the views of children, including the issues around the quality of teaching and learning. Within many local authorities, for children with complex or special needs, the route into discussion

has been via parents or carers who have been involved with professionals. In such instances it could be argued that pupil voice has been enabled through seeking to increase parental voice, yet there may be questions over the actual level of pupil involvement.

From 2010 policy seems to have changed direction with less emphasis on pupil participation. Amendments to the Ofsted Framework (2013; 2014) have changed this expectation on schools and merely require inspectors to find pupils' opinions, with a heavy focus on their view of behaviour reflecting the views of policy makers. Pupil views are then investigated by adults, who form a judgement, without any further reference to pupils. In 2014 the government issued statutory guidance regarding pupil voice. A scant, two-page document, which seemed to reflect the reduced importance attached to the area by central government, simply offered the following guidance:

The term “pupil voice” refers to ways of listening to the views of pupils and/or involving them in decision-making. You may also hear the expressions “learner voice” or “consulting pupils”. A feature of effective leadership is engaging pupils as active participants in their education and in making a positive contribution to their school and local community. (p. 2)

With regard to the development of the pupil voice agenda in school, Whitty & Wisby (2007) identified advancement of the following four factors as the main influences for school involvement:

- Children's rights
- Active citizenship
- School improvement
- Personalization of learning

Wisby (2011) withdrew the latter factor, presumably reflecting the Coalition government virtually removing personalized learning from the educational agenda, but maintained the other three as key influences in promoting student voice activities in schools. Of

these factors, she found school improvement was the main attraction for schools to involve themselves in promoting pupil voice. There is a view that the purpose of school improvement is to impact upon the relationship between the teaching and learning process and the conditions that support it (Harris, 2002; Hopkins, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994; Barth, 1990). So, school improvement involves some reform and educational change, which ultimately can come in various forms (Fullan, 2007; Giroux & Schmidt, 2004; Harris, 2002; Fullan, 1999). Yet these adult views raise prospective issues, as schools and children are potentially placed at odds, as there can be no guarantee that each side shares the same view of so called, 'school improvement'. Furthermore, it may be questioned as to whether in such a scenario children merely become adult 'tools' in the broader accountability game. Interestingly, the notion of compliance with nationally dictated approaches is not mentioned in this list, although one wonders whether so many initiatives would exist in schools without the ever-increasing pressure of policy and associated accountability.

The factors identified by Wisby (2011) are reflected by others (Fielding, 2012; Lundy & McEvoy, 2012; Czerniawski & Kidd, 2011; Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010). Whilst Whitty & Wisby (2007) found that the emphasis on school improvement meant that the children's rights factor was often relegated to being the least significant. Whether the three factors should be separated and individualised is questionable, as in essence they are very closely linked, with development of rights and active citizenship seen as essential elements in the enhancement of social justice. Wisby (2011) claims that whilst interest within schools has been shaped by and within a neo-liberal framework, there is a need to develop more 'dialogic models' with a greater emphasis upon social inclusion. This view is shared by Fielding (2012) who sees the link to citizenship and ultimately, participatory democracy as the key aspiration. He goes on to call for a rights-based approach to student voice to predominate, Lundy & McEvoy (2012) agree, suggesting that whatever the motive a rights-based approach should still be a paramount aim.

At this point it may be worth questioning how many children are used to being heard in this kind of way at home. Whilst Roberts et al (2005, p.356) found that the 'quality and responsiveness of the home environment was the most consistent and strongest predictor of children's language and literacy skills', these rich language learning environments were not found to be widespread and even where they occur, they do not necessarily equate to children's opinions being sought and acted upon. So, even though children may have the necessary language to participate, they may still be somewhat taken aback at being asked for their opinions in initiatives that seek their participation and their 'voice'.

Models and typologies for participation

Woodhead (2010, p.xxi) claims that whilst there have been many enthusiastic participation projects, they have often lacked well-developed conceptual frameworks being too-heavily reliant on what he terms 'simplistic models, notably the participation ladder.' Possibly the most referred to participation ladder is that of Hart (1992), who developed it as a way of helping assess the level of pupil input within participation projects. This ladder contains eight steps, with each step representing increasing degrees of children's participation and different forms of cooperation with adults, with the three lowest steps on the ladder being categorized as 'non-participation'. Shier (2001) also created a hierarchical participation model in a similar vein to Hart. His model, 'Pathways to Participation', included five levels of participation, avoiding Hart's lowest levels of 'non-participation', but importantly recognising the importance of commitment levels from the setting's position. Whilst acting as useful starting point at the time for thinking about children's participation, the simplistic shortcomings outlined by Woodhead have been confirmed by the authors themselves (Shier, 2010; Hart, 2008). Both accept their original models were too narrow, being focused on individual projects, and largely outlined adult roles in the process, rather than providing frameworks for a wider application. Through work in Nicaragua, Shier developed a

more comprehensive model, a 'Participation Tree', which, whilst acknowledging the complexities of non-tokenistic participation, was built upon not just recognition of children's rights, but an ability to fully exercise those rights as equals.

The importance of recognizing rights is, according to Woodhead (2010), fundamental to the participation agenda, although its application has not always proven to be straightforward. He also recognizes that the role and responsibility of adults is not diminished in this search, but is in fact increased as the demand for effective participation needs to properly account for children's situation and capacities, factors recognized by Shier (2010) in his model. One could ask whether in-house practitioners, with inside knowledge of children, are thus better placed to take on this role. It is Lundy (2007) and Lundy & McEvoy (2012) who have looked to develop a more comprehensive model in this particular area. Lundy & McEvoy claim the rights paradigm, whilst recognising children's ability through their agency, also acknowledges their entitlement as rights holders, claiming that in such instances the duty falls upon adults to ensure these rights are respected. Lundy (2007) developed a model of participation constructed upon a rights-based approach and this original model was enhanced by the addition of the requirement that adults engage deliberate strategies to aid children in the formation of their views prior to participating in research.

For Lundy (2007), full implementation of the UNCRC requires children to be involved at all stages of the decision-making that impacts on them in Britain's schools. She claims that 'voice' activities do not necessarily represent an incontestable good and recommends a more critical approach be taken when analysing the ways in which children are asked to participate. She proposed a new model claiming it was necessary for the successful legal implementation of Article 12. This model requires the implications of the following four factors to be considered (The first two elements are related to the right to express a view whilst the latter two are linked to the right for those views to be given due weight.):

- Space – a key first step with children actually being asked about matters which impact on them rather than being involved in issues pre-determined by adults. A safe space must be offered for participation of a diverse and inclusive range of views with no fear of comeback for open responses.
- Voice – participation should be meaningful with all children given the right to express their own views.
- Audience – Article 12 requires children's views to be given 'due weight' and Lundy proposes a minimum requirement of a 'right of audience,' (p. 937) with a guaranteed opportunity to communicate their views to decision makers (this is not always the case with school councils).
- Influence – this relates to the right for children's views to be given 'due weight' although she recognises the difficulty in assuring children that their views have been taken seriously.

Having attempted to work within this conceptual framework, Lundy & McEvoy (2012) identified that an explicit rights-based approach to participation may differ from other approaches in that it not only requires children to be helped to express opinions, but also provides support to enable them to form such views. Within such a framework researchers are required to build children's capacity to enable them to fully engage with the research issues. They felt that such capacity-building often neglected work to develop children's informed views of areas under study, based as they were on the premise that children, as experts in their own lives, do not require this element.

Lundy & McEvoy (2012) built on the initial model by widening the focus from simply compliance with Article 12 to incorporate a fuller consideration of other Articles that should be taken into account when conducting research with children to create an explicit UNCRC-informed approach to participation. In this way research seeking to develop greater understanding of children's views and opinions should not only meet the above elements, but also should develop deliberate strategies to help children form

views on areas under study. To this end Lundy & McEvoy (2012, p.140) suggest children are given:

Information (Articles 13 and 17) and adult guidance (Article 5) while their views are *in formation*, in order to be assisted in determining and expressing what will then be both a *formed* and *informed* view (Article 12).

For them a rights-based approach requires these elements to be incorporated in research projects with children like mine, although the specific tools are left to the discretion of the researcher, allowing for differences in application across different projects. Such an approach, they suggest, allows children to contribute in areas outside of their immediate experiences and so, it could be argued, allows a greater scope for participation. Although it could be argued that we are all generally more confident when asked about areas related to previous experiences and such an approach could be quite challenging or even confusing. Effective teaching is often based upon enabling such connections between the learner and what is taught. Furthermore, adults could influence the development agenda and thereby influence outcomes. Despite this, such an approach does offer an alternative lens through which to view the role of the researcher in the adult-child relationship.

In a similar way to Shier (2010) and Lundy (2007), Fielding (2012) has moved on in his framework development. Whilst recognising the importance of rights, Fielding has always seemed to concentrate more on the cultural and contextual conditions required for the successful implementation of participation and student voice activities (Fielding, 2012; Fielding & Moss, 2010; Fielding, 2001). Fielding (2001) outlined a framework to help examine levels of student involvement in schools. Within this framework he distinguished between students as sources of data, students as active respondents, students as co-researchers, and students as researchers, with the latter reflecting the conditions for successful voice initiatives outlined above. Within this, his preferred approach was that of students as researchers, recognising a shared commitment and responsibility for education.

In outlining a new typology, 'Patterns of partnership: how adults listen to and learn with students in schools', Fielding (2012) draws distinctions between the ways in which children and adults work together. He includes the first two strands from his initial framework, but goes much further than previously with the following four additional strands included:

- Students as co-enquirers
- Students as knowledge creators
- Students as joint authors
- Intergenerational learning as lived democracy

With different power relations at each stage affecting the possibilities for adults and young people to learn with and from each other, he sees participatory democracy as a legitimate and ultimate aspiration. Fielding (2011) claims we are at a key junction in development and sees participatory democracy with its ways of living and learning together as an antidote to the prevailing consumer-oriented, market-led approach. Within this approach he asserts the importance of relationships, presenting a relational view of democracy based upon three considerations:

- an enabling view of what young people are capable of;
- acknowledgement that such open views are partnered with respect and regard for what the children's rights movement has done to develop over last two decades;
- attention will be paid to relationships, to care as well as to rights, justice and power.

Relationships were a very important part of my study and I feel that the study's longer-term nature provided time for them to be played out and developed more fully.

Problems and issues with student voice

Thomson (2011) identifies a range of issues relating to both the concept of student voice as well as with the practical approaches employed within the area. Similar

concerns are raised by others (Fielding, 2012; Wisby, 2011; Morgan, 2009; Whitty and Wisby, 2007). At a conceptual level Thomson outlines, amongst others, issues with the use of voice in the singular and the possible perception of voice as a sole, unified view. Like other social categories, children are not a homogenous group, but represent an extremely diverse spectrum. She goes on to state that whilst it is 'highly unreasonable to expect ... a simple and united voice' it is also 'deeply problematic if differences are not encouraged and recognised.' (p.22). She also highlights issues around children being asked to employ voice for a range of reasons and purposes as researchers need to take account and be aware of the ways in which purpose and context require different kinds of responses. She expands on this notion of context to state that 'all voice is situated, particular and partial' (p.23) and in light of this researchers need to acknowledge that children, like all people, do not always behave in the same way. She also warns of the need to avoid taking responses as 'unwavering truth'. Indeed we can idealise, even romanticise, the contribution that children can make. This is potentially a key issue with regard to research with children as it is important that such research avoids the trap outlined by Pollard et al (1997, p.5), who state, 'Listening to pupil voice should not be seen as sentimental or romantic, but as a serious contribution to educational thinking and development.' Therefore, as the studies analysed above indicate, there seems little doubt that children are capable of expressing their views on a number of aspects that are important to them, and are well placed to make valuable contributions to research. Nevertheless it is important that these views are not left unquestioned, simply because they are children, and that any flaws are recognized and acknowledged.

With regard to more practical issues, Fielding (2012) identifies four areas that he feels are especially significant. Firstly, not all pupils may be involved and those excluded may be the ones who are viewed as less successful or less important than some of their peers. Thomson (2011) also questions the selective nature of participants, which leads one to question whose voice is being sought and ultimately heard, and why it

may be only a restricted group. Secondly, Fielding affirms the need for a rights-based approach rather than patronage, describing a method which is heavily reliant on the goodwill of adults, as being somewhat condescending and also prone to fluctuation, dependent upon the adult taking a lead which appears the case in many of the studies I have consulted (see CaR section below). If such an issue were to be overcome it would surely address the concerns of Thomson (2011) and Lundy & McEvoy (2012) regarding the lack of support and training for participants, particularly in regard to relevant background information. Within a rights-based approach a further concern expressed by Thomson would be addressed, that of there often being little follow-up. She suggests that in many projects the act of speaking is seen as an end in itself rather than being useful in shaping ways forward. Thirdly, Fielding (2012) highlights the tensions for teachers who wish to implement certain worthy practices, but lack support within school whilst also facing growing pressures from curriculum and exam performance. Thomson (2011) also questions whether learning within voice activities is actually regarded as 'real' learning, as the skills developed are not examined and as a result lack recognition. Finally, Fielding suggests that voice activities can become a tool of management, claiming that in many settings they merely reflect the prevailing quality assurance procedures, taking on a form of monitoring rather than genuine improvement. A narrow focus on school performance, rather than improvement, Wisby (2011) argues, has brought about an alignment between the prevailing neo-liberal agenda and student voice, when it was once seen as a potential antidote. Such a view reflects the tokenistic nature of voice activities questioned by Thomson (2011) and Wisby (2011) where being seen to be playing the participation game is more important than being genuine active partners, with what is actually discussed representing a fairly limited spectrum. In my study I endeavoured to avoid any tokenistic developments, such as the poorly constructed questionnaires, requiring only superficial responses, cited by Fielding (2012) by attempting to allow children access to their own choice of issues.

Hill (2006) explored children's views on different research methods and these would seem to reflect some of the points made above. He found that children, like Fielding, were also highly critical of forums presenting only a restricted number of views. In particular, when those views too often came from adult-selected participants, it meant certain standpoints were excluded and often led to support for a school-preferred option. Children in his study, without necessarily recognising it as a rights issue, recognised a need for certain levels of competence for full participation and the need to be supported in gaining such competence. These points were particularly relevant to the way in which I sought to progress my study.

To expand on the issue of student voice being a tool of management Whitty & Wisby (2007) conducted an in depth study of school councils, one of the widest manifestations of the voice movement. They discovered a number of these issues affecting the potential for them to have a genuine impact, the most significant being:

- No clear rationale for provision and consequently no success criteria against which to assess the provision.
- Little impact on ethos in encouraging the development of voice resulting in councils having low status within schools.
- Staff reservations
- Wider pupil support and involvement was found to be lacking with councils being seen almost as an exclusive club for a chosen few, reflected by a perception that there was no real wider consultation.

The first three issues cited seem to be attributable to a lack of adult support, and probably a lack of commitment to the purpose. They highlight the dependence of the pupil voice agenda on the need for this support, a view expounded by Lundy (2007), who found that a major barrier to compliance with Article 12 was the need for the full cooperation of adults. She found adults were not always fully committed or maybe even

looked to defend their own vested interests. For her, adult concerns centre around the following three key areas:

- A belief that children lack the capacity to take part fully in contributing to the decision-making process
- A fear that an increase in the control exerted by children will somehow undermine authority and potentially destabilize the school environment
- A feeling that compliance will take too much effort and neglect other key areas.

These findings coupled with Fielding's (2012) comments regarding patronage would suggest that whilst adult support is vital, the way in which that support is provided is equally important so as to avoid the condescending approach he describes.

The general findings from the studies carried out by Whitty & Wisby (2007) and Lundy (2007) suggest that the remit for pupil voice is often highly restricted, as schools can find it easy to comply with outward signs of consultation in tokenistic or decorative ways, yet still ignore children's actual views. Where a more consultative approach is taken, there is often too narrow a scope focusing mainly upon limited elements of school environment and facilities, dubbed 'toilets and chips' issues by Whitty & Wisby (2007, p. 312). This limited view of impact is supported by findings in Morgan (2009) when she cites examples of perceived school council success in her study of a single school including toilet redecoration, the installation of new decking at the front of school and covers for bike sheds. Morgan also found that children themselves expressed concerns regarding the selection of council members amongst pupils. Too often, for some of these children, it was popular pupils or those perceived as clever who were seen to be elected to councils, leaving many feeling disenfranchised as their views were not considered to be represented. At best, there is confusion around the requirements with schools not really feeling comfortable about giving pupils a voice particularly in important areas that could affect serious matters and transform relationships within schools. Indeed, Fielding (2001b) claims that too often adults speak on behalf of children whilst misunderstanding or simply disregarding their perspectives.

He also emphasizes that where children are increasingly consulted, this is often through teacher-generated questionnaires. He cites fear and a need to control as major elements in this approach, increasingly affected by the methods of external accountability applied to schools, rather than a genuine desire to involve children in the decision-making process. In such cases, power can certainly be seen to rest with adults whose motives for such activities would seem questionable. Securing genuine change thus requires a culture shift in school life, in which children's views are not just valued and respected, but seen to be integral and embedded within decision making. I wanted the children in my study to achieve this through their research activities.

2.5 Children as Researchers (CaR)

Within a growing recognition that children and young people are competent social actors, capable of involving themselves in their communities and schools (Smith, 2011; Hogan, 2010; James et al 1988), Wisby (2011. p. 32) cites the practice of students as researchers, whereby children in school are supported in conducting research around a topic they themselves have identified, as a provision that 'enables students to initiate or input into decision making and see through change in their school.' For her it is a route that has utmost promise for a challenge to the existing status quo and moves student voice beyond 'manipulation, tokenism and consultation' (p. 32) to a shared dialogue between students and teachers. This view seems to clearly link voice to a school improvement agenda and presents a different view to The Open University Children's Research Centre (OUCRC) whose website promotes children as researchers with the aim of 'enabling children and young people to have a research voice in society and to make valuable contributions to knowledge from their perspectives.' (OUCRC, n.d.) Their role in this is stated as two-fold, firstly, to develop approaches to support children's investigations in self-selected areas and secondly, to assess the impact and benefits of that research and the effectiveness of their own methods. I believe that my approach within this study sits somewhere between these two views, reflecting the

intrinsic value of children as researchers, whilst recognising that it could help to influence school improvement and the quality of life in school.

Although a relatively recent development, children (or students) as researchers projects seem to come in a range of forms with a number of different approaches seemingly represented, these include:

- Child reporters (Acharya, 2010)
- Children's Research Action Groups (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012; Lundy et al, 2011)
- Schools Council Action Research project (Yamashita & Davies, 2010)
- Participatory projects (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009; Bland & Atweh, 2007)

In more recent times there has doubtless been a greater predominance of children taking on the role of researchers, in terms of being involved in collaborations with adults and also carrying out research with a degree of independence. It is possible to point to an increasing number of research projects where, in addition to filling a more traditional role as research subjects, children are involved in the planning of investigations and questions, as well as collating results and, sometimes, analysing findings. Since Oldfather's (1995) study there have been a number of key studies where children have taken on the role of researcher (Malone, 2012; Davies, 2011; Morgan & Porter, 2011; Fielding & Bragg, 2003). These have occurred across a range of contexts involving children of different ages and demonstrate children's ability to conduct their own research. Others that are pertinent to my proposed work are those of Burton et al (2010), Barratt Hacking & Barratt (2009), Frost (2007) and Kellett et al (2004), as they occurred with primary aged children within the context of school.

Bucknall (2009) carried out a multiple-case study of Children as Researchers (CaR) initiatives from which she developed a model for good practice (see below, from Bucknall (2010). This highly detailed model identified seven central themes along with a range of inter-related issues and illustrates the factors and processes that she found impacted upon children's experiences within such projects. It seems to reflect the

complex web of relations that are found within schools and thus influence such projects. Bucknall (2010, p.12) places the all-embracing issue of power centrally as ‘the way it is exercised influences every aspect of the programme’. Although influenced by power, the model also recognises the centrality of dialogue and communication highlighting the significance of relationships in affecting all elements of similar programmes. These particular elements seem particularly pertinent to my work with regard to the specific focus of an insider researcher playing a key part in the development of children as researchers and the developing interactions between them and me. In this respect the model offers a valuable tool to help provide a focus for emergent themes from data.

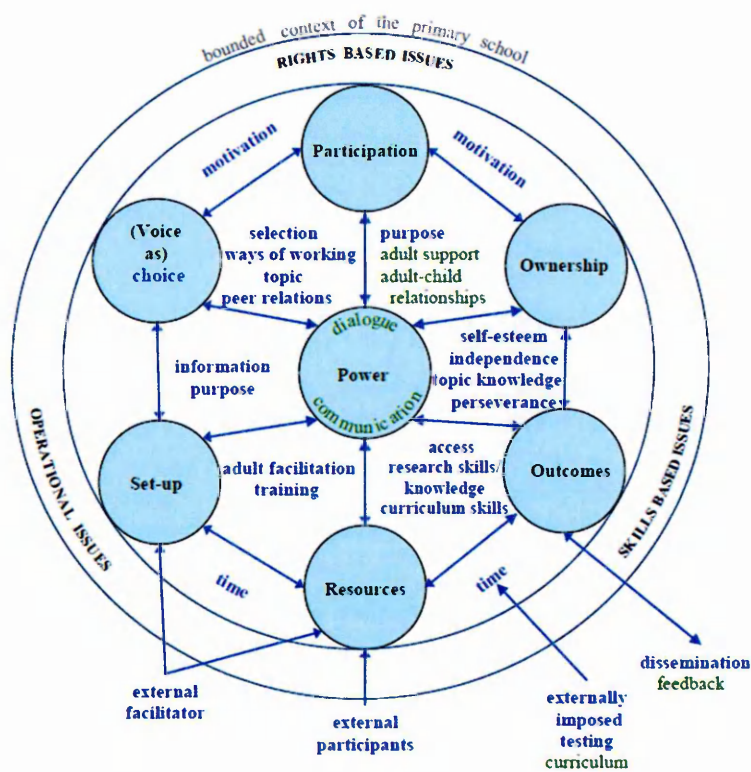


Figure 1: Factors and processes which impact on children as researchers in English primary schools (Bucknall, 2010, p.8)

The children as researchers approach has seen the raising of a number of potential barriers which question their ability to do this successfully. These arguments have been accompanied by a range of counter claims, which frequently compare children with adults unskilled as researchers, and subsequently outline how children could act successfully as researchers. Alderson (2009) claims that much child research remains

unpublished as it is not really recognised as worthwhile, being seen more as a 'practice' for more serious research by adults. She suggests that children begin to be researchers during their time at school when they conduct a number of projects. I have witnessed this within my own school, where children have established a 'healthy' tuck shop, identifying a number of both healthy and popular products to sell based on findings from their own market research in the school playground. Similarly, it could be argued that children are developing a sense of informal research skills when they engage in 'child-initiated' learning within Early Years settings, when they demonstrate inquisitive behaviours that lead to exploration of ideas and a simple analysis of the refinements that may result. This may be an indicator of how children might carry out research if left to their own devices, and not given a more formal research role and trained by adults. In this sense children may be seen as natural 'enquirers', however it is, of course, some way from Stenhouse's (1975, p.142) view of research as 'systematic inquiry made public.'

The barriers to children's involvement as active researchers and recognition of their work are outlined by exponents of such ideas, who also claim such barriers are based upon false claims (Bucknall, 2012; Kellett, 2010; Lansdown, 2010; Kellett et al, 2004). I will now explore the following commonly referred to problem areas in more detail:

- Children's lack of competence due to their age
- Children's unreliability
- Children's lack of knowledge

In line with the claims of Hill et al. (2004) these barriers are based upon adult perceptions of children's capabilities. Whilst it could be argued that children do not have the vocabulary and conceptions of an academic researcher, and as such are not capable of conducting research to the level of an adult, professional researcher, the converse argument would suggest adults are not equipped with the language and conceptions that relate to the child's view of the world. Furthermore as Bucknall (2012) points out, adult researchers can misrepresent and disregard children's views,

especially if they conflict with their own, whilst an adult interpretation of data has to be made from an adult perspective – in such ways children's voices can be muzzled. She also asserts that the assumption that the view of the adult as expert promotes beliefs of adult superiority and adds to the perpetuation of unequal relations between adults and children. Woodhead & Faulkner (2009) also point to the growing principle that the value of social experience carries far greater authenticity than an external, second-hand view. Moreover, the Victoria Gillick case (*Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech Area Health Authority*, 1985), stressed that understanding is more important than chronological age in establishing competence, and individuals with this understanding are best placed to make decisions that affect themselves. Similarly, Lansdown (2010) claims that a wide range of factors influence competence, not merely age, and to place competence within such a narrow confine is hazardous as it fails to recognise wider experiences that determine a child's capability to participate successfully.

The accusation that children are unreliable, as they will tell an interviewer what they think they want to hear or don't have the knowledge and perception to be able to clearly relate their experiences, would seem to be open to question. Kellett (2005) cites the work of Scott (2000), who suggests that adults are equally likely to present different views and see fact and fiction merging in different contexts and in response to different audiences. The very nature of 'truth' means that, as an individually constructed concept, these issues will arise in all types of research. The key then it seems is to construct research that is understandable and meaningful to whoever is involved, child or adult, which clearly means taking considerable care.

In answering the question as to whether children have sufficient knowledge and understanding to generate in-depth investigation, Kellett (2005) points out that although adult knowledge in many areas is greater than that of children, in the key areas of childhood, surely it is children who have the current, up-to-date knowledge regarding their own context. Kellett (2010, p.8) further suggests that 'children obtaining

knowledge ... from their insider perspective has the potential for change and transformation'. Children, Alderson (2009) suggests, are in certain ways better suited to research than adults, seeing things with a more open and less restricted view. Whether this refers to traditional research, pursuing a rigorous scientific method as defined by the research community, or to a different child-driven form is not made clear. She further proposes they are more ready to accept new findings whilst asking some radical questions as, unlike adults, they feel less need to protect their own personal situations as their own roles are under less threat. Although to this point I would add the caveat that children may have their own personal investments, and even bias.

Taking account of these responses to potential barriers, a suggested way forward is to look at methods that combine support and autonomy, in much the same way as Kellett et al. (2005), Frost (2007) and Burton et al. (2010), with children being supported in some way to eventually carry out their own research. In these projects, with children acting as researchers, they began with the teaching of research skills, although they each used a slightly different approach. For instance, although Barratt Hacking & Barratt (2009) did not formally teach research skills they did establish a research team, made up of children and adults, in which methods were developed via discussion and negotiation, with some informal 'teaching' along the way. One could argue that whilst such approaches could be seen as empowering, they seem merely to confirm that children need the same skills as an adult researcher to carry out research. If it is claimed that children are uniquely placed to carry out their own research, then this is in fact very different to encouraging children to carry out an enquiry in ways of their own choosing. Lundy & McEvoy (2012) question whether this method provides a complete rights-based approach. For them the focus on building capacity through training children in research methods, whilst developing competence, suggests that children's views are already formed, so they only need to develop the means through which to express them.

Holland et al. (2009) identify four main forms of research involving children, which seem to reflect the original four levels in Fielding's framework for student researchers (2001a). They outline the following four progressive stages of participation:

- Children as participants, with all aspects designed and controlled by the researcher
- Children's views expressed through 'child-centred' research tools and techniques, such as play, art and photography, although the methods are still chosen by the researcher.
- Children involved in research process in research design, data analysis and dissemination.
- Children 'trained' in formal research methods so they can carry out the research themselves.

Within these respective approaches, they acknowledge that there is often overlap in aims and means between the last three approaches. In my own study, even partially, there were times when all four stages were brought into play at certain times and in specific ways.

In conducting her research initiative with ten-year old researchers, Kellett's (2004) initial phase was to establish an extra-curricular Research Club for academically 'more able' nine and ten year olds. She spent ten weeks teaching research knowledge and skills and then supported children in designing and carrying out their own research projects. Within this project, children were able to choose their own area of research, often reflecting interests or areas of concern. Frost's (2007) approach differed slightly to Kellett's, however. In a bid to enhance inclusion, she taught research skills to a whole class of mixed ability Year 3 children, over a period of six weeks, and then sought volunteers to take part in the development of supported group research projects of their own. These taught sessions occurred during the normal school day, so as not to impact on children's free time. Burton et al. (2010) also taught a programme to whole classes of Year 5 children for one afternoon session per week over a whole term,

working in two schools. Their aim was for children to be taught the skills of research and then conduct their own research in an area of their own choosing, which links with the way I worked with the children in my project.

Lansdown (2002) stressed a number of benefits for children by increasing their participation in research programmes, including the acquisition of new skills, the enhancement and building of self-esteem, the opportunity to simply have their say and be listened to and thereby, contribute to better decisions being made. Oldfather (1995), developed research with students as co-researchers, and therefore, by implication, co-learners, and identified that they developed a stronger sense of their own abilities, a deeper understanding of how they learn and a better understanding of how they are motivated. The following comments from pupils in her study would appear to support this:

- *John - (explaining how he has changed) 'I have thought consciously and continuously about what motivates me and now I look for motivation.'*
(p.134)
- *Lauren (discussing the learning process) - 'I learned that learning is not only learning from books, but learning from people around you. I used to think that when you learn there is only one right answer.'* (p.134)

Following their project, Kellett et al. (2004) noted comments from parents with regard to enhanced confidence and self-esteem of their children and their increased willingness to engage with councils and corporations regarding their views. One would need to investigate such potential outcomes further to establish whether children's involvement in the research 'caused' these effects, or whether it was a result of the increased personal encouragement that children can receive from a special project, or both.

2.6 Power relations

Martin & Franklin (2010) recognise the importance of power in relation to children's participation and identify it as a potentially 'significant barrier to meaningful

participation' (p. 101), identifying power issues in both, adult-child relations and the structured power of organisations. These issues are particularly pertinent to my study as both of these factors are prominent and as such, it is important to analyse the potential impact of power in detail. Power dynamics are identified as important in a number of works (Robinson & Taylor 2012, 2007; Gallagher 2011, 2008a, 2008b; Taylor & Robinson 2009) where the concept of power in relation to participation and research is explored in some depth, attempting to address the issues raised by Hill et al. (2004) that explicit clarification of what is meant by power and how it operates is rarely made. In his work Gallagher (2008a) draws upon the work of Foucault to consider the participatory aspect of power, outlining an oppositional model of power along with a redistributive model, which seems highly relevant to research aimed at increasing participation.

Foucault's notions of power evolved over time and it could be argued that as a result of this he did not develop a single theoretical position, but rather a set of viewpoints which can be applied to assist and support reflection by researchers (Dillon, 2014; Gallagher 2011, 2008a, 2008b; Lukes, 2005). Indeed, Allen (2012, p.4) suggests that 'there is no coherent Foucauldian framework against which an interpretation of his work could be judged for its correctness.' His work was concerned less with the oppressive aspect of power, such as the (Marxist) views expressed by Althusser (1984), whereby power is seen as a top down model with individuals subjugated by the state. Instead, Foucault (1982, 1978, and 1977) sees power as less of a directly oppositional prospect and more one of a diverse and complex web of relations which dissipate through all relational structures of society. In this view power, according to Gaventa (2003, p.3), is 'diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them.'

Where power is viewed as the ability of an agent to inflict his will over that of another or force them to do things they do not wish to do, then in this sense, power becomes a possession of those in power. However, in Foucault's (1980, p.98) opinion, power is not something that can be owned, but rather something that acts and manifests itself in a certain way:

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain . . . Power is employed and exercised through a netlike organization . . . Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application.

Foucault's studies of power in relation to institutions, coupled with the key feature of understanding power as an encompassing network and system of relations rather than a relationship between oppressor and oppressed, provides a good basis for looking at power within a school. This would seem to relate to Bucknall's (2010) model which acknowledges the centrality of power and the importance of dialogue and communication. In this way the focus has to take in how relations and influences that arise in schools can affect the way in which voice, for example, is expressed.

For Foucault (1982) the way in which power is exercised is a key question to be answered and, at the root of this, is the way in which humans are made subjects. By being placed in relations of production a person is equally placed in complex power relations; this situation could be said to arise in schools where the production of 'results' creates a culture in which both children and adults are placed in situations founded upon complex power relations. Furthermore, when this is placed within the context of social reproduction as outlined by Bourdieu & Passeron (1977), a range of influences, both from within an individual institution and from outside, can be seen to impact on children in particular, which affect how their 'voice' can be expressed. For Foucault the techniques of power, rather than being obvious, have an apparent neutrality and invisibility which enhance their success and impact. In a similar way, Bourdieu & Passeron claim power relations are concealed beneath indirect and subtle

control mechanisms which add legitimacy to them. From this basis, I will explore the influences of, and on school which impact upon children and their 'voice'.

The school as an institution is involved in a series of diverse power relations from different interest groups – policy makers, administrators, teachers, parents and pupils. Various reforms/legislation are directed by policy makers which create a power umbrella through a carefully crafted system of accountability. Indeed, Bourdieu & Passeron (1977) suggest that educational systems perform two key functions:

- Cultural reproduction (of the dominant culture) and
- Social reproduction (of the power relations between groups and classes within a society)

These external influences exert a powerful drive to actions taken within the institution and shape many of the intended outcomes of local policy. For Bourdieu & Passeron, a system of power is maintained by the means of transmission of culture. This is applicable to a whole system, but can be worked down to a pedagogic level and at a local level the way in which power within a school is maintained. It is within this complex web of relations and techniques that one has to look at the role of power at a micro level within the institution. Indeed, one has to speculate whether, given this, each individual institution with its own ethos or culture shapes children in a particular way, influenced by the standpoint and beliefs of adults. This was reflected in Robinson (2011, p. 449) who found that 'aspects of the schools' hidden curriculum transfer implicit moral messages and expectations to pupils, which in turn influence the way pupils think and act within the school to an extent where such influences may inhibit pupils thinking as independent individuals.'

For Foucault (1982, p.510), the term power only exists when it is put into action and designates relationships between partners. Power relationships can be defined as 'A mode of action that does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions; an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present

actions.' Throughout his analysis he focuses on how power is exercised and the effects it has in different contexts, stating:

...the issue is to determine what are, in their mechanisms, effects, their relations, the various power-apparatuses that operate at various levels of our society, in such very different domains and with so many different extensions. (Foucault (2003, p.13).

In school this manifests itself in a number of ways, including the organisation of space, rules and regulations, the transmission of knowledge and the codes that govern and define daily routines. In a general sense this reflects the dominant culture of Bourdieu & Passeron (1977) whilst more specifically it reflects McLaughlin's (2005) view of educational ethos, whereby a tone of interaction is set shaping the experiences of children and thus influencing perceptions, dispositions, attitudes and beliefs. Bourdieu (1977) suggests that the unconscious principles of ethos, as produced by a learning process, go as far as to determine what individuals consider to be 'reasonable' or 'unreasonable' conduct. This milieu, in which an individual school operates, generates a specific culture within a larger culture. This means that differing contexts generate individual schools with their own individual nature and power relationships. Seen in such a way power is less a confrontation and more of a question of 'government', where possible fields of action are structured, yet subjects are faced with choices within this field of possibilities. In such situations freedom is a vital concept within power relations, yet the behaviour of active subjects is still influenced in a number of ways. Taking this notion it could be implied that the granting of voice by the dominant power is merely an extension of that power and does not really result in a power transfer. This may be reflected when Gallagher (2008b) cites examples of pupil exercising power by refusing to cooperate with researchers.

Foucault (1982, p338) identifies schools as one of a number of 'blocks' within society in which, 'the adjustment of abilities, resources of communication and power relations

constitute regulated and concerted systems.' Activity within a school ensures learning and the acquisition of aptitudes or types of behaviour via a range of regulated communication and power processes. This government of children is built upon relationships and Foucault identifies the importance of relationships between 'partners' and distinguishes power relations from relationships of communication. As such, communication is a way in which one person is able to act upon the actions of another. Bourdieu & Passeron (1977, p.7) also recognise the importance of communication within pedagogic action, claiming the conditions for teaching take place within a 'legitimate language of learning' and additionally, that the pedagogic authority of the transmitter of the message or the knowledge ensures pupils are conditioned to accept the message. Receivers, according to them, are disposed from the outset to recognise the legitimacy of information transmitted. This view is supported by that of Foucault (1982, p.343) who sees a major 'point of anchorage' for the establishment of power relations of this government sitting outside the school itself. External influences on both adults and children, mean power relations are rooted in a whole social network, including families, and not just found within the school itself.

The position of school it seems, cannot be a neutral one. It finds itself in a difficult position regarding power relations, with the need to maintain its own authority whilst addressing the power agenda emanating from the arm of the state, which Foucault recognises as somewhat ubiquitous in all relations of power. Thrust into this is the issue of pupil voice, directed at schools via central policy, taken on by some who wish to be seen to be doing the right thing, and in some cases, from a genuine desire to take account of children's views.

Arnot (2006) argues that the use of pupil voice as a concept can become a tool used by those in authority to promote hidden agendas, feeling that legitimacy is added to decisions made by those in power, school leaderships and teachers, which appear to take account of the views of pupils. Similar points are elaborated by Robinson & Taylor

(2012, p.44) who question whether 'staff and students can meet as genuine partners', when a dominant school agenda, both 'overt and hidden', carries considerable influence and can restrict the voice of individuals. As illustrated earlier, the control of the school council agenda represents an element of this, undermining Fielding's (2001a) aim of student voice representing an everyday norm. It may more reflect the desire of schools to be seen to take account of the views of children whilst pressing forward with a centrally driven agenda.

Given the importance of communication highlighted by both Foucault and Bourdieu & Passeron, closely linked to the ethos of an individual school and classroom, one has to take account of the influence each school has on the particular voice to be found there. Alcoff (1991) recognises discursive context, the location and specific situation of a speaker, will exert an influence over what is said. In a similar way, Arnot et al (2003) identified what they referred to as 'pedagogic voice,' asserting that voice as a concept is heavily influenced by the power relations that exist within the context in which voice is generated. Arnot & Reay (2007) extend this idea even further by suggesting that the voice of pupils in school is fashioned by the pedagogies they experience. These voices they assert, are therefore not necessarily the voices needed to influence future pedagogies. Bourdieu & Passeron (1977) would suggest that choices exist within a system of 'inculcation' which helps to generate acceptable ways of thinking. In this way, the school promoted ethos gains legitimacy, as it is seen as 'truth' by both those with and without power. In this way the views of children are influenced and potentially more likely to be expressed in support of the 'school view'; particularly when one considers that, to a large extent, schools are places where children do what adults require of them.

Similarly, it is important to recognise that even when asking children to conduct the research, each one will experience school in a different way. So, whilst an intended outcome of my research was to encourage children to speak for themselves, it was

also important to be aware of the potential influence of power inequalities within their social group. As Arnot & Reay (2007) explain, some children have been better at acquiring the pedagogic voice and are, therefore, better able to express their views within the language of school. Bourdieu & Passeron (1977, p.35) also speak of the 'cultivated man' (sic) as one who becomes competent within a culture and reaches a high level of accomplishment within it. In school this could be those 'star pupils', recognised by both teachers and their peers, who appear to have better cracked the schooling code, or joined in with it and are thus better placed to participate. Hilltop has a socio-economic profile that presents considerable extremes, with 60% of children coming from the lowest socio-economic band and 10% from the highest. In this respect it was important for me to consider the socio-economic backgrounds of the children involved in research work, both as researchers and researched, aiming for an open policy which allowed all children to take part out of choice.

Both Alcoff (1991) and Arnot & Reay (2007) identify the conditions in which dialogue is developed as being of primary importance implying that, for school-based research, the practice of speaking to and with children should present a major focus. Arnot & Reay seem to support this view, arguing that researchers should concentrate on how voice is generated within classrooms, especially as this provides both the context for interaction and the mode of communication. Each of these elements are further influenced by the interactional conditions established within each classroom. With regard to school ethos and culture, Bourdieu & Passeron (1977) argue that the conditions for teaching, and the dominant philosophies, are imposed by adults within a legitimate language of learning. Yet, I would suggest, some may be whole school or individual teacher and classroom, in much the same way as McLaughlin (2005) points out when he suggests the school ethos may be slightly different, or even at odds with, that in an individual classroom. Potentially, this could indicate that different responses would be expected from different classrooms dependent upon the influences of varied cultures within each

classroom as established by the dominant power, the teacher. It is then important to identify where school and classroom ethos maybe comes into conflict.

Given the above, for me a number of elements related to the concept of power needed to be examined. My own role as headteacher in school, with its traditional hierarchical structure, placed my role as a figure of authority in a clear position of power and ways of minimising it proved difficult at times, yet remained imperative. Therefore, the relations between me and children needed to be considered in this light, along with the roles of other adults and children. My own position, not just in relation to pupils, but also with adults, proved worthy of scrutiny given the existing working relations and the inherent power role of my position. Furthermore, it was also important not to see children as a homogenous group, but recognise there are power relations at play in their interactions as well. For me, examining power within school in relation to the concept of pupil voice, whereby apparent power is transferred, two further key questions arose in relation to my study:

1. Given the nature of power, can the balance truly be transferred?
2. Is the empowerment of pupils really possible?

3.1 Methodological position

Within this research project the methodological approach drew on an interpretivist orientation taking account of one of the four abstract typologies outlined by Hammersley (2007). Interpretivists are concerned with the production of reconstructed understanding of the social world where there is no single truth, but any truth is partial and incomplete (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this way reality is constructed by individuals in a society, and therefore may differ depending on people and societies. Such an approach places emphasis on the socio-cultural aspects of perception and cognition and the sense people give to situations is fashioned by local cultures. Thomas (2011a, p.51) suggests that case study approach is well supported by an interpretivist paradigm, taking the view that each person is affected by the environment around them. Consequently, seeing people in context, where 'action is defined by interactions between people and situations,' is an essential aspect of case study research. The recognition and influence of this local culture is particularly important for me given the comments, regarding pedagogic voice, made in the previous section.

The collection and analysis of data which was descriptive and analytic, rather than experimental or correlational, focused on attempting to provide a snapshot in time and place. In this respect it supported the aim of interpretive research as outlined by Schwandt (1994, p.118), to develop understanding of 'the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it.' The approach was further exemplified as the study allowed the concepts of importance to emerge, in an attempt to capture the constructs of the children as participants. I feel this view emphasises a dynamic interaction between researcher and participants, which is central to capturing their lived experience. Furthermore the acknowledgement of multiple realities and interpretations accepts that the role of researcher is not independent from research itself.

3.2 Study design - case study

In locating my study within an appropriate methodological framework, my intention of making a detailed study of a specific instance within a single school, what Cohen et al (2000, p.281) refer to as a 'bounded system', meant that a case study seemed to be the best approach to adopt, in a similar way to the single case studies conducted within primary schools (Jorgensen et al, 2009; Stringer, 2009; Maher, 2008; Rose, 2000).

This allowed me to observe and work with children in the real context of school, dealing with the day-to-day situations encountered therein, to both study and judge the worth of an initiative. Yin (2009, p.18) recognises an important strength of a case study approach is the ability to undertake an investigation into a phenomenon in its real-life context, particularly, as is relevant to my study, when 'the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.' In this instance, although the project had a clear focus, the impact of the school context was likely to be ever present. It seems to me that a rich, holistic investigation, within its natural setting, was necessary to gain a more comprehensive picture of events where the unplanned, ongoing and multiple interactions shaped the study from the differing range of those involved. In this respect a case study approach allowed for the recognition that this dynamic context in which children find themselves is important and can impact upon both causes and effects within a unique location with its own complex interactions and relationships. Moreover, given the longer term time-scale of the project, it allowed for a greater in depth analysis. Cohen et al (2000, p.182) cite Hitchcock & Hughes (1995) claiming that case studies, 'blend a description of events with the analysis of them (and) focus on individual actors or groups of actors, and seek to understand their perceptions.' Indeed, Simons (2009, p.21) states that a key element of case study is the commitment to a study of the complexity of real situations and provides the following definition:

Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a 'real life' context.

Thomas (2011b, p.513) offers the following definition:

Case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the subject of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame - an object - within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates.

Within this the subject is identified at the outset in one of three main ways:

- A local knowledge case, or a
- Key case, or an
- Outlier case

In my situation I feel my involvement and familiarity fit the notion of a local knowledge case. The object is less easily identified and indeed, need not be defined at the outset, but may emerge as an inquiry progresses. These definitions encapsulate my aims and allow for a study that seeks to explain in depth and detail, whilst recognising unique and dynamic features, allowing for emergent themes to be explored which may be lost in a larger scale study. Moreover, my integral involvement in the study as a researcher and headteacher, as well as the emergent role of supervisor, further reflects this element of case study.

It could be argued that there was an element of action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis, 1981) within the study; elements such as the taught programme involved a planned approach which was then changed following reflection. However, the greater part of the project was allowed to unfold in its own progressive and organic way. As such it did not follow the systematic processes outlined by Carr & Kemmis (1986, p.164) where 'planned actions are implemented, and then systematically submitted to observation, reflection and changes' or the spiral of self-reflective cycles of Kemmis & McTaggart (2000, p.595) of planning, action and observation, reflection, followed by re-planning as the cycle continues. Whilst I believe my study was responsive to the needs and requirements of the children involved, it did not follow this strategic process of

progressive problem-solving. It is a characteristic of action research that the participants as well as the researchers participate in the analysis, design and implementation processes. Although there was close involvement and relationship between researcher and children, as participants, and although they were heavily involved in planning their own work, they were not necessarily fully involved in my work as a researcher of the developments. Perhaps a case could be made that some of the children took on more elements of action research as they planned and revised some of their approaches.

It is important to recognise at the outset that there are certain weaknesses levelled against the case study approach, in particular the notion that a lack of generalization somehow undermines its validity. Thomas (2010, 2011b) and Flyvberg (2006) both question some of these, including the inability to generalize, the subjectivity of the approach, with too much allowance for the researcher to present their own opinions, and that it is suited to pilot schemes rather than fully-fledged studies. With regard to generalization, Thomas (2010, p.576) refers to the Aristotelian idea of *phronesis* to draw a distinction between the 'establishment of regularities, generalizations, laws and universals in theory' within the area of natural science and the experiential knowledge of *phronesis*, which is about 'practical knowledge, craft knowledge, with a twist of judgment squeezed in to the mix' (p.578). In this sense judgements are made in regard to experience and *phronesis* is developed in practice. So for him *phronesis* is about understanding and behaviour in certain situations rather than the theoretical establishment of consistent, testable and absolute laws. He then argues that 'the case study thus offers an example from which one's experience, one's *phronesis*, enables one to gather insight or understand a problem' (p.578). He recognises that a process of developing 'looser generalizations' within local circumstances, which he refers to as 'abduction', (in contrast to the induction of natural science) provides a way of analysing complex social worlds that, although may not provide watertight guarantees of success in explaining occurrences, can offer insights into the understanding of problems or

issues based on individual phronesis or experience. Validation thus emerges via connections and insights offered between another's experience and one's own.

Thomas (2011b, p. 513) suggests a typology for conducting case study based upon his definition, which provides a useful frame of reference for my work. Within this he makes a clear distinction between the subject and the object and claims a case study comprises of the following two elements:

- 'A "practical, historical unity," which I shall call the *subject* of the case study, and
- An analytical or theoretical frame, which I shall call the *object* of the study.'

In this typology Thomas identifies purpose, approach and process as key elements.

The purpose is simply linked to the object of the study and the reasons for its being undertaken, the explanations required and the understanding needed. The approach offers distinctions between the kinds of study being undertaken and, where they are not in some way theoretical, allows for the object of study to be illustrative. Where theory is involved it can be tested and set out at the beginning or be seen as emergent and developed throughout. Following a decision about approach, there are choices to be made about the methods to be adopted. This allows for a methodological pluralism with wide choices which affect the construction of the study; the operational process. This is concerned with the subject and initially requires boundary considerations that limit the subject of study to be made. These choices revolve around the following areas:

- Person
- Time
- Period
- Place
- Event
- Institution

A further initial consideration that determines the process is whether the study will contain a comparative element; whether it will be single or multiple. For me within a

time-limited and institution-bounded study, the single case is the obvious option and allows for a combination of what Thomas refers to as a 'diachronic' study, which observes changes over time and allows an interest to develop in these changes within the timeframe. This framework links to Thomas's (2010, p.579) concept of a phronesis-based case study, where the ingredients he identifies fit well with my intended approach. These ingredients allow for 'incremental chunking', which means related information can be put together to create a story over time, which concentrates not merely on what people do, but also on what they think and feel; their beliefs, desires and values are just as important. Furthermore, it recognises that all this occurs within a unique situation and does not require the significance of such situations to be referenced to or judged against others. For Thomas, this context sensitivity allows a reader to make sense of the narrative of the case and agree or disagree with the researcher. He also refers to the use of analogy, where observations may be compared to one's own experiences as a way of making the unfamiliar, familiar. This approach fits well with my own personal standpoints and provides a clear framework upon which to base my work.

3.3 Insider research

Theoretical viewpoint

A key consideration for this study concerns the status of both the children and me as researchers within a familiar organization and community in which both were existing members. As 'natives', both could therefore be deemed to be insiders, in contrast to outsiders, who would hold no previous knowledge of the school. By applying this definition between the two positions, the difference between them seems relatively clear cut; however the insider-outsider status of researchers in such a situation is not as straightforward as this.

In attempting to define the two positions, Merton (1972, p.21) conceives that 'insiders are members of specified groups and collectivities or occupants of specified social

statuses; Outsiders are the non-members.' Nevertheless, he goes on to further identify the difficulties in attempting to achieve a degree of unity in defining groups by a particular single status. Similarly, Mercer (2007) identifies a clear distinction between stranger and native as expounded above, suggesting that the position of researchers in the study can be seen as that of insiders. However, in a similar way to Merton, she expands on this notion suggesting that such a clear distinction does not extend to that between insider and outsider. The notion of 'insiderness' is subject to more than being native to the context under study. It is linked to the status of individuals involved. In reference to status, Merton (2007, p,22) identifies that individuals do not have a single status, but have what he calls a 'status set' which is not necessarily constant, but subject to change. If this is the case, insider status is subject to many variables. For me, not only am I a white, middle-aged, adult male, but also the headteacher in the school where the research was undertaken and therefore, the occupant of a number of different social statuses. Even the children, who as researchers may enjoy the same child status as others in school, but in other ways could be seen to be different, for example, by virtue of age or perceived status, either as older children or from the potential impact of their being viewed as researchers by their subjects. The single status notion seems somewhat flawed, as surely, not all white, middle-aged, adult males shared the same views and perceptions.

These different features of researchers lead Mercer (2007) to suggest that insider status is multi-dimensional, not only being affected by the personal features outlined above, but also by the time and place of the research and the personalities of those involved, as well as the power relations that exist between different parties. This implies that the insider status of a researcher is not fixed, but subject to change. Thus, Mercer (2007) suggests that, rather than the terms insider and outsider being seen as representing a dichotomy, and accepting that humans cannot be classified by a single status, the two terms are better viewed as poles at the ends of a continuum. In this case, researcher status is then not fixed, but changeable, operating across the whole

continuum, which seems to be particularly relevant to my variable positioning, given the multiple roles I filled during my study. Taking this a little further, Dwyer & Buckle (2009, p.62) also reject this polarised view, identifying the space in between the extremes and encouraging researchers to 'embrace and explore the complexity and richness of the space between entrenched perspectives'. In a sense, it could be claimed that I was an insider in terms of stimulating and enabling the children as researchers, but also an outsider, undertaking an EdD as a student researcher, objectively studying what was happening; so an obvious challenge for me was managing these roles.

The notion that children belong to a number of different groups or communities of practice has further connotations to the learning theory of Lave & Wenger (1991). They developed the notion that learning is situated in communities of practice and happens beyond educational intention through, what they call, 'legitimate peripheral participation' in social practice. They see a community of practice as a fundamental condition for knowledge to exist and the place of knowledge is within that community. Wenger et al (2002, p.27) identified three basic structural characteristics of such a community of practice. These are 'a *domain* of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a *community* of people who care about this domain; and the shared *practice* that they are developing to be effective in their domain.'

Wenger et al (2002. p.68) go on to identify that these communities are continually evolving identifying the following five stages of development:

- Potential
- Coalescing
- Maturing
- Stewardship
- Transformation.

As a researcher it was interesting to observe children and ascertain whether or not a community of learners developed in this progressive way.

Insider status – advantages and disadvantages

There is a question as to whether insider status conveys an advantage or not to the researcher and Mercer (2007) suggests there are pros and cons of both positions, identifying the following four areas for exploration:

- Access
- Intrusiveness
- Familiarity
- Rapport

In highlighting these areas Mercer (2007, p.7) likens carrying out insider research to the 'wielding of a double-edged sword' with the potential advantages of the position being negated by potential pitfalls.

With regard to access, there is an assumption that this is easier for an insider, which seems true for Kim (2012, p.269), who as a perceived insider, writes of 'privileged access' and a feeling that permission to conduct research from decision makers was more easily gained than would have been the case for an outsider. This was also the case for Perryman (2011), who was granted access to a school at a difficult time during an Ofsted inspection. The proposal here is that similar permission would not have been granted to an outsider at such a demanding time. For me, this ease of access is probably more pronounced as, being the headteacher, much of the decision-making in school actually rests in my hands. In practice, this meant having once gained permission from the Chair of Governors (then children and parents), I was able to determine many of the research routes as I did not really need to seek permission to act within the school. As an example, this allowed for greater flexibility during the teaching programme. For the children, access was gained via me to an extent, although some were able to negotiate this for themselves. In the first instance, if they were perceived as my 'agents', then this had the potential to change their status, particularly when dealing with other adults in school.

Mercer (2007) further claims that this ease of access enables data collection to be less time consuming as the researcher is on site constantly and as a result availability becomes almost perpetual. However, this may present an issue in that it is difficult to distinguish between research stopping and other roles beginning. In Mercer's case she was contracted and present on site for forty hours a week giving little respite from the context. Similarly, Perryman (2011) was contracted to work in a school where she undertook research and was therefore in constant contact with subjects. My own role, as headteacher, meant that although being present in school for large parcels of time, the necessities of the role, coupled with other work, meant that I was also away from the site at certain times.

The issue of intrusiveness also offers different viewpoints and Mercer (2007) cites Hawkins' (1990) suggestion that insiders who continue with their everyday role have more impact on research than an outside researcher. To contrast this, she cites Hockey (1993) who suggests that intrusiveness is reduced as an insider, as one is better able to blend into situations and as such, less likely to affect outcomes. She goes on to draw a distinction between the roles within the organization played by the researcher. In the case of Hawkins, he was the headteacher, the same as me, and Mercer suggests that his influence was likely to be different as a result of his status. My status has obvious implications, particularly with regard to power, although there is the potential for intrusiveness to extend beyond the more obvious to the impact my eleven years as headteacher have had on the school ethos and consequent pedagogic voice within the school. For the children, maybe they fit better into the Hockey version, being better able, as pupils, to blend into situations than an adult, although this could be heavily dependent upon their approaches to research.

Pertaining to familiarity, Mercer advocates that insiders have better initial perceptions of the social locale, as they have prior knowledge of the more delicate links between situations and events. On the other hand, familiarity can lead researchers to take things

for granted and lead them to miss things that would be more obvious to an outsider. Thus, Mercer insinuates that familiarity does not necessarily lead to richer explanation, but can indeed result in thinner, rather than thicker, description. In practice, Perryman (2011) found people spoke to her and made reference to previous events, indicating that they knew and were familiar with the researcher with whom they were talking. Kim (2012, p.269) suggests that as 'the researcher's experience in the context is similar to that of the participants, they have common understanding and better relationships with each other.' This may be similar for me as the headteacher working with children.

In relation to rapport, Mercer (2007) suggests that insider researchers have an advantage in that they have already established relationships with subjects within the organization and as such begin with greater credibility and rapport. She further suggests that such conditions may lead to increased levels of openness and honesty than might be the case for outsiders. She does however, acknowledge the contrary position to this where certain information may not be shared with insiders for fear that it may be used against them, or present them in a poor light. In this case it seems that the pre-existing relationship is especially important, along with what may happen as a result of the research responses. Again, Kim (2012, p.268) found the former to be the case feeling that she already had a rapport with her subject and thus required less time to establish what she called this 'research relationship'. I find the phrase, 'research relationship,' to be an interesting one and it may be that, although I already had a relationship and rapport with children, the notion of a 'research relationship' was not reached via a short cut, but developed throughout the process.

Mercer (2007) goes on to distinguish between two views of 'insiderness' and 'outsiderness' and, like Merton (1972), suggests that rather than seeing them as single positions, if they are viewed as more pluralistic, then they become two poles or extremes of a continuum. She claims that where they are seen as points along such a continuum, rather than one being seen as better than the other, then the value of both

can be recognised in a range of contexts. This view of a continuum seems to fit well with my particular position, which is also complicated by the different roles inherent within my research, particularly the distinction between researcher and headteacher. This would suggest that my status set may be subject to fluctuation during the process and a continuum would better allow for this position, where the degree of 'headteacherness' affecting the role of researcher or vice-versa, does not remain constant. It could be claimed that 'headteacherness' provides my strongest, all-pervading identity, especially as I am the instigator of a school-based initiative with children from my school and in my care. In this case my challenge was to maintain an objective researcher's identity; outsider supervisors, through comments and advice on the research process and my role within it, helped to meet this challenge. Similarly, the children, although peers of their subjects, held different status sets as researchers which could also be subject to this fluctuation. Whilst sharing pupil status, a major difference to my position avoiding many of the associated power issues, the children as researchers occupied a different position to their peers. In this position it is possible that other children viewed them as being somehow different, particularly as Year 6 pupils they inhabit the cultural milieu of the school in a very different role to other younger children. Also as the oldest children in school, it is possible they are viewed differently by Year 3 pupils and other Year 6 pupils, with whom they have greater familiarity. They could further be seen as my representatives, even in their classes, potentially demonstrating some influence with the adults that would not normally be the case.

So, whilst a researcher may be considered to be an insider, it seems that the degree of insiderness will not remain constant, but will be subject to fluctuation dependent upon the different status sets that are prominent at different times and, the way a researcher manages any tensions between these. However, it is important to remember that whilst there may be certain advantages for insider researchers, this does not necessarily

make data any richer and that any research is still reliant upon the quality of the work undertaken.

3.4 Ethics

The issue of ethics, relating to the principles of one's conduct and the rights and wrongs of that conduct, were important throughout my research. Morrow (2008, p.51) defines ethics as a 'set of moral principles and rules of conduct', which in research, prevent harm, promote good and are respectful and fair. This notion of morality is also highlighted by Hendrick (2008, p.63) and his claim that ethics relates to the morality of 'dealing with values, with the practices of right and wrong, good and bad.' Both examples emphasised the need for me to apply high standards to the governance of my conduct in order that the processes I followed remained ethical.

Punch (2002a) argues that researchers' perceptions of childhood, and the status they attach to children in society, influences how children and childhood are understood, and for her this view influences every aspect of the research process with children: design, methods, ethics, participation and analysis. Morrow (2008) points out that in everyday life adults had tended to show little respect for children's views and opinions and this had a knock-on effect for research. Research concerning children has seemingly gone through a range of stages, with children being seen in a variety of ways. For many years children were viewed as objects of research, with a number of somewhat questionable methods being employed in the name of research. Woodhead & Faulkner (2009) cite the example of the Strange Situation Classification (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970), devised in order to investigate how attachments might vary between children. This method raises a number of ethical questions including the distress and pain caused, the use of deception and lack of consent. In more recent times they go on to argue children have increasingly been recognised as social actors in their own right, becoming subjects of inquiry. For me, as a researcher and educator, this kind of work seems somewhat inappropriate and the debateable methods engaged made me think

carefully about how I approached my own work to avoid similar implications. I would agree with Hill (2010), who argues that children's competence and their capacity for understanding has been re-evaluated upwards in more recent times, with faults increasingly laid at the door of adults and their failure to adapt to children's perspectives.

A central theme related to ethics with regard to research involving children revolves around whether research with children is the same as or different from research with adults (Hill, 2010; Morrow, 2008; Punch 2002a). Potential differences stem from the ways in which children are viewed. Punch (2002), Morrow (2008) and O'Kane (2008) all cite the four models of theorising childhood expounded by James et al. (1998), and this seems to provide a useful basis for examining the role of children with each notion being linked to social competence and having implications for research methods and techniques. The four models presented are:

- The 'developing child' where children are seen as incomplete, being on the path to becoming adult and lacking status. This is a view that has tended to undervalue the competency of children.
- The 'tribal child' whilst being recognised as competent is seen to be part of a world independent from adults with its own rules and agendas.

In both these two models children are not recognised as having the same status as adults, unlike the following two models:

- The 'adult child' is seen as socially competent in the same ways as an adult, therefore, it is presumed the same research methods and tools can be used for both. Morrow (2008) points out that this view does not always adequately address the issue of social status differences between children and researchers.
- The 'social child' although comparable to an adult as a research subject is recognised as possessing different competencies which 'permits researchers to engage more effectively with the diversity of childhood.' (James, 1995, p.14).

These views of children affect the ethical status of children in research and in this respect Alderson (2004, p.100) outlines three levels of children's involvement:

- Unknowing objects who are 'not asked for consent and may be unaware that they are being researched.'
- Aware subjects who are asked for informed consent but research takes place within strict adult-designed approaches.
- Active participants who willingly take part in flexible research which uses a wide variety of accessible methods, with children increasingly becoming involved in all stages of the research process.

Punch (2002a) claims that discussions about research with children have tended to focus on ethics, particularly the issues related to informed consent and confidentiality and those ethical issues have often been thought to be the central difference between research with children and research with adults. With further regard to ethics, Morrow (2008) argues that the ethical considerations that apply to adults must also apply to children, although with four additional provisos which are closely linked to the factors identified by Punch, which need to be considered when comparing research with adults and children.

First, Morrow claims children's competencies may be different according to their perceptions and frameworks of reference, influenced by social differences such as culture, age, gender and ethnicity. Hill (2010) also highlights this factor stating that children's verbal competence and capacity to express and understand abstract ideas varies between different ages of children. Although it is important to recognise children at any one age differ widely in development, and this is certainly borne out in my own experience. Secondly, she claims children are potentially vulnerable to exploitation when involved in interaction with adults. A number of differences highlighted by Punch (2002a) could be linked to this notion, including the perception of power that exists.

Punch claims it is important for researchers not to impose their own perceptions, but to find the best ways to enable children to express their views. This seems to represent central point in the debate regarding children as researchers and can be seen as a continuum extending from children being trained as adult-like researchers at one end to children being invited to carry out inquiries in their own ways at the opposite end. As an adult involved in this process, the way in which one positions oneself along this continuum could have a significant input on what is produced at the end of the process.

Punch (2002a) also highlights the impact of unequal power relations on children trying to please adults and in this way suggests they may lie or exaggerate or say what they think an adult wants to hear, particularly within a school setting where they are used to providing 'correct' answers; children need to be reassured there are no right or wrong answers. Whilst Hill (2010) suggests a researcher should seek to minimise the authority image they convey, this was almost impossible for me given my role in school. However, getting the children to take on the role of researchers helped to alleviate the situation. Hill (2010) suggests that differences in social status cannot be avoided and I tried to address this by involving children at all stages. Morrow's (2008) third point extends the notion of differential power relationships to potential issues when data is interpreted and findings presented, as adult competencies within this are likely to be more highly developed than those of children. Again this links closely to points raised by Punch (2002a) and can possibly be partly addressed by the use of appropriate research methods which are sensitive to children's competencies and interests coupled with the role of children as researchers. The interpretation of children's views by adults is filtered through adult perceptions and therefore presents difficulties, whilst this is also important for children when they are involved in the interpretation of other's views, they will at least be processing data through a child's view of the world. Finally, Morrow (2008) recognises the dominant mode of research with children takes place in schools via adult gatekeepers, which has implications for

informed consent and as Hill (2010) states, children are not pressurised into taking part as perceived weaknesses mean they are increasingly vulnerable to persuasion.

Although, there are a number of potential differences with clear ethical implications as Hill (2010) points out, for me the model of the 'social child' proposed by James (1995) seems to offer the best view upon which to base research, as within this children are recognised as being competent social agents with different capabilities to adults. It also reflects Alderson's 'strong, resourceful child who shares in solving problems and creating new opportunities' (2004, p.101). This view accepts children may be better equipped to communicate via a range of media, such as, drawings, stories and written work. Indeed, as Alderson (p.100) further suggests, 'the greater control children exercise over the process the more they enjoy it and findings may more accurately reflect their own views and experiences.' My research tried to bear this in mind, being prepared for a diversity of methods and techniques, although the involvement of children as researchers offered a clear advantage in addressing many of the potential ethical pitfalls. Indeed, as Hill (2010, p.66) points out 'very few studies enable adult users to contribute to the research aims, design, field work, analysis or reporting.'

3.5 Methods

Case studies are typically built up from multiple sources of data and according to Bassey (1999) include asking people questions, observing what happens and analysing documents. Yin (2009) and Thomas (2011a) expand on this list with more specific examples with Thomas (p.162) citing the following as the most commonly used ways of collecting evidence:

- Interviews (structured, unstructured and semi-structured)
- Group interviews
- Focus groups
- Interrogating documents
- Questionnaires

- Observation (structured, unstructured and participant)
- Image-based methods
- Measurements and tests
- Official statistics
- Other numerical data

Stake (1994, p.236) points out that the methods of investigation are not crucial to case study research, but that the object of study is the case, being defined 'by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used.' This is a view supported by Thomas (2011a, p.170) who suggests rather than an approach or a method it is 'a container for a situation ...and ... may contain a range of phenomena to be analysed.' Yin (2009) places more emphasis on the method and the techniques that constitute a case study. However, for purposes of this study I feel that the wider and more holistic approach of Stake and Thomas is more appropriate given my own interest in the individual case. Thomas (2011a, p, 162) also distinguishes between the seeking of data and the seeking of evidence. For the former, one enters a study '*without* a tightly constructed theory or set of propositions ... seeking data that will gather around ideas which emerge as the study progresses.' For the latter, one begins with a clear hypothesis or well-defined theory and searches for supporting (or not) evidence. This distinction is important for my work given the emergent nature of an initiative I set up and my study of its development.

Whilst using a number of the methods outlined by Thomas (2011a), the principal data collections approaches in my case study were:

- Unstructured and semi-structured interviews. As the study progressed the number of meetings with groups increased and I believe these meetings took the form of unstructured interviews. Thomas (2011a, p. 163) claims these are 'like a conversation' and there is 'no fixed way to conduct such an interview', with interviewees setting the agenda and direction of conversation as topics

emerge. I believe the numerous meetings I had with children took this form with me taking on the role of listener and facilitator.

At other times interviews became semi-structured as I sought to cover certain issues which I felt were emerging as the work progressed. In such circumstances I believe I used what Thomas (2011a) refers to as 'probes' to encourage participants to expand on what they were saying.

- Observation. Predominantly this took the form of unstructured (or participant) observation, where I immersed myself in situations, watching as Thomas (2011, p.165) states 'informally (but methodically) in and among' children, making a record of what was happening. As with the interviews, as the study progressed and ideas and themes began to emerge I made observations with a specific focus in mind, particularly with regard to behaviours.
- Diary. Throughout the taught sessions I kept a comprehensive diary, written immediately after the sessions were completed. Also as the study progressed into more individualised work, the increased number of interviews with children required a clear record, and again, notes were written up as soon after the event as possible, and always within twenty four hours. In some cases, they were written during the actual discussions, particularly when I felt children had said something important and I didn't want to lose the essence of their expressions; in such instances notes were written verbatim, eliminating the need for recall. In addition to recording the content of discussions and observations, my notes also included personal reflective comments on such things as how I saw things progressing, particular responses from the children or the possibility of emergent themes for further investigation.
- Interrogation of documents and accounts – Throughout the study children produced a wide range of documentation to support their research and consequently, an element of my work involved the examination of their written work. Some also kept logs or diaries, where they were able to 'communicate

experiences and feelings freely', reflecting what Thomas (2011a, p, 163) refers to as accounts.

I also used an exit questionnaire which was given to all participants, although not all were returned. This was presented with the option for anonymity, which some children took, whilst others put their names on the sheet. I also undertook semi-structured, paired exit interviews with a number of children, taking written notes during the meetings.

Stake (1995, p.74) claims that researchers use two methods to interpret data, 'direct interpretation of the individual instance and through aggregation of instances.' He acknowledges that this process is subjective as the aim is not to fully describe the case, but rather to make sense of certain parts of the case through close surveillance and careful reflection. Similarly Thomas (2011a, p.171) refers to constant comparative method, which he claims is defined by the basic principle of 'going through data again and again, comparing each element with all the other elements' and from this themes emerge that 'capture or summarise the essence of your data.' These emergent themes become the building blocks of analysis to identify the meanings that are being constructed. Stake (1995, p.78) also recognises that the 'search for meaning is often a search for patterns, for consistency, consistency within certain conditions, which we call "correspondence."' He states that important meanings usually appear repeatedly, but also accepts that significant sense may be drawn from a single instance. He also acknowledges that although the research questions can provide a focus for analysis, sometimes patterns may emerge unexpectedly.

In analysing the data I took account of the above notions to make constant comparisons of notes and observations to identify emerging themes. To further support my interpretation, I paid regard to Stake's (1995, p.77) comment that whilst 'each researcher needs, through experience and reflection, to find the forms of analysis that work for him or her ... (the) primary task is to come to understand the case.' As

much of my data took the form of narrative accounts, I felt that my analysis would rely heavily upon what Simons (2009, p.119) refers to as 'direct interpretation, hermeneutic analysis and intuitive processing.' To further make sense of my data and provide a narrative of the case, I made use of Miles and Huberman's (1984, pp.245-261) thirteen tactics for generating meaning from data. Tactics such as, noting patterns and themes, seeing plausibility and building a logical chain of evidence were especially pertinent to my analysis of the children as researchers. Patterns that emerged from the data were related to the literature and the literature in turn informed the research focus. For example, I used a number of analytical tools derived from the literature to interpret the data including:

- The concept of 'voice', 'audience' and 'influence' (Lundy, 2007).
- The role of adult support (Lundy and McEvoy, 2012).
- The role of cultural and contextual conditions (Fielding, 2012; Fielding & Moss, 2010; Fielding, 2001).
- Factors impacting on children as researchers (Bucknall, 2010).

Punch (2002a) claims research with children has tended to be viewed as one of two extremes; either the same as or totally different to research with adults. For her, this perception of children's status has then influenced the methods chosen by researchers. She goes on to highlight a more recent perspective, one where children are seen to be similar to adults, but with different competencies. She further asserts (Punch 2002a and 2002b) that researchers who subscribe to this view have used and developed a wider range of tools and techniques which are more in line with children's skills, including pictures and diaries, use of drawings and radio workshops. Punch (2002a) qualifies this view by explaining that such techniques should not merely be seen to be exclusively part of research with children, but highlights the need for researcher reflexivity, with reflection not only on their role and assumptions, but also on the methods used and the way they are applied. For her the suitability of methods depends very much upon the research context, adding that 'a fundamental aspect of human-

centred research is to respect individuality (whilst) researchers need to be reflexive throughout the research process' (p.338), in order to be responsive to the needs of research subjects.

To further aid the selection of appropriate methods, Hill (2006) highlights the value to a researcher of gaining some possible insight into how respondents may view particular research methods, as this may influence the effectiveness of communication and the motivation for respondent involvement. In his report for the Scottish parliament, Hill (2006) explored children's views on different research methods. He found key points including the following:

- Children prefer options, as they recognise different methods suit different people.
- Children regard inclusivity as important being critical of selective forums where a restricted number of views are used and dislike apparent favourable treatment for some over others.
- Crucially, the general view of children indicated that when they or their peers influence the questions being asked there is increased likelihood of gaining a better response. Hill claims evidence suggests the use of children as researchers does encourage others to be more open to those of similar age and experience.
- They are attracted to methods that give immediate pleasure, and he refers to Alderson (2001), who claims when children carry out their own research using group interviews, they tend to use exercises that help 'one another feel confident and relaxed'.
- In choosing between individual or group communication, most expressed a preference for group work, feeling more supported in such situations and appreciating the value of sharing. Children did highlight certain issues in relation to child-child power dynamics, showing resentment for others who tried to dominate groups.

One could speculate as to whether this list would have been similar if adults had been consulted as to their preferences, and if this was the case, then is a separate list for children really required?

Hill et al (2004) also stress the importance of the process, so it was important for me to develop participative principles with children determining the way in which they chose to get involved. This would reflect the views of Moss' (2002) with children seen as actors not respondents, and as the co-creators of knowledge with others. I believe such approaches should be less easily manipulated by adults and have the potential to be generally more inclusive. The direction and focus can become more unpredictable, as when children decide the issues they consider to be important, results cannot be known in advance. This further highlights the need for researcher reflexivity in such circumstances

Whilst using case study methods, the approach I took was influenced by ideas emanating from participatory techniques outlined by O'Kane (2009), who identifies a number of key features of participatory research that were supportive and reflective of my work. Firstly, researchers and researched are viewed as active participants, this means issues of power, control and authority in the process have to be recognised. Secondly, being based upon an understanding that each person's perception of their situation may be as valid as any other, researchers have to become active listeners, as techniques allow participants to establish their own 'analytical framework and their own interpretation of reality' (p.129.). For O'Kane the successful use of participatory techniques lies in the process, rather than simply the techniques used and a commitment to on-going information-sharing, dialogue and reflection greatly facilitate the use of such approaches. Indeed the philosophy of, children as 'experts in their own lives,' seems to have been recognized by Iona and Peter Opie (1959, p. xxvi), when they observed:

The modern schoolchild when out of sight and on his own, appears rich in language, well-versed in custom, a respector of the details of his own codes, and a practicing authority on traditional self-amusements.

I feel O’Kane’s view influenced my approach to working with the children. In committing to on-going communication with children I adopted an ‘open-door’ policy, which facilitated this process. Certainly, this active participation of children led me to acknowledge the role of power in the process, being a prominent influence on my thoughts and actions throughout the project.

Within the children’s work my role as supervisor could be viewed as reinforcing, rather than eliminating the ‘expert-subject’ dilemma outlined by Cope (2009). The route that the children were set upon allowed them to develop some of their own approaches, which I feel, could be described as ‘participatory’. During my study I attempted to explore potential participatory methods for children to use in their work addressing the following issues:

- The development of communication strategies which engage children, and allowed their agenda to emerge and take precedence.
- Allowing for changes to the power status as children set their own research agenda rather than answering a researcher’s limited questions or trying to provide a perceived ‘correct’ answer.
- Support for different methods (including visual) so that children of varied literacy skills were able to take part

This section considers the methods used by me as a researcher rather than those used by the children, who chose their own research methods. The following chapters will detail the process in which children were taught a range of data collection methods and approaches, along with the choices they made for their use.

Chapter 4 – Involving the children in research

4.1 Introduction

The following section explains the process that was undertaken in trying to move children from unskilled and largely unaware researchers, to the position where, with differing degrees of success, some were able to undertake their own research work. It also outlines the ways in which my own role developed and changed throughout that process, charting a range of stages, where I was able to increase the extent of the children's participation as the initiative progressed and my relationship with the children became better established. At the outset this process was very much adult-led, with my role being more of a teacher, promoting 'adult-type' approaches. As the children's competence grew, they were given more freedom to direct their own work and developed some of their own approaches for acquiring data. In response to this increased competence, my role changed, taking on a more responsive aspect and becoming increasingly, that of supervisor. In this respect I had to assess individual and group needs, based upon observations and discussions with them. As a result, the commentary that runs throughout this section is important in illustrating both my methods and those of the children, as well as explaining the processes I felt I was going through as a researcher. Throughout, I tried to illuminate the role and actions of the children and, where possible, highlighted the thinking that supported their actions. I also analysed the role I played in managing the process, along with my own thinking.

4.2 Taught programme

The first step was to teach selected research skills to children and Kellett's 'Developing Children as Researchers' (2005), which provided a complete programme of work to cover this, seemed a particularly good place to start. It included clear learning outcomes with suggestions for core activities and even contained supporting, photocopiable resources. It made no assumption with regard to prior research knowledge on the part of either teacher or children and as such was presented in an easy to follow format. The only real alternative at this stage was to try and develop my

own programme, and at that juncture I do not believe I had the necessary expertise. Kellett's programme was based upon two years of trialling in an attempt to find 'ways to teach research methodology to children without compromising its core principles' (p.1). Therefore, the best alternative seemed to be to take the only pre-existing programme I could find and try to adapt it to fit my own circumstances.

The programme was presented as being essentially for 12-14 year olds, but claimed to be accessible to more able 9 and 10 year olds. Although as she herself states, it is 'important to establish that doing research is not an activity confined to able pupils' (p.4). I therefore, entered into the programme realising that I would probably need to make some adaptations, given the mixed ability nature of the Year 5 group I was teaching. She proposed a series of 12 taught sessions covering a wide range of aspects relating to the research process. This formed the basis of the lessons I taught to two parallel, mixed ability classes of Year 5 children in my own school. In the book suggested activities were presented at two levels, 'intermediate' and 'advanced' and I tended to follow the intermediate route, as it seemed a better match to the abilities of the children I was working with. Initially, I planned to teach a series of six sessions as outlined in Table 1 (below). Although the timing of sessions was irregular, due to the classes and my own commitments, there was at least a weekly session delivered over six weeks. I began this taught element with whole class sessions as part of normal curriculum time. I felt this approach was justified as the content and intended learning outcomes would be beneficial to the learning of all children.

For these proposed lessons, I decided to focus on Kellett's ideas for initial sessions, which concentrated on elements looking at what research is, research ethics, along with an examination of a research report to look at the structure. I felt this approach would enable the children to better appreciate some of the techniques of data collection, which I proposed to teach as a follow-up to these initial sessions. I decided

to leave the analysis, report writing and presentation skills for a later date, or for possible development with a focused research team.

Table 1 – Aims of each activity session

Session	Aim of session
1	What is research? – for children to begin to develop an understanding of what research is.
2	Learning from other’s research – begin to understand the structure of a research paper and the difference between good and bad research,
3	Research ethics – begin to understand the key ethical issues to be considered when conducting research
4	Framing a research question – begin to understand what a research question is and use a ‘funnelling’ technique to formulate a question.
5	Questionnaires and surveys – to develop an understanding of good and poor questionnaire design using statements and a Likert scale and unbiased questions
6	Observation techniques – to begin to understand and develop observational skills

Commentary

Burton et al (2010) taught their own programme of research to children producing an outline and commentary of this taught programme to explain how it worked and to highlight any issues that arose. A number of points for consideration arose during my programme and their work offers a very useful point of comparison to my own, as it followed a similar path in these initial stages, therefore I will make links to it where I feel it is appropriate.

At the outset, I admit to feeling somewhat daunted at the prospect of teaching research skills to a mixed ability group. I did not think children would necessarily find it straightforward and had concerns regarding their engagement and my ability to keep the programme interesting. This would possibly be the case with many new topics being introduced. However, in this instance, I felt that I would also be learning as I went along, never having delivered such a programme previously with no one else in school to call upon for support and the point of reference being the Kellett text. Although it had to begin as a teacher-led activity, I did feel that the interactive nature of the learning activities was one children in school were used to and I felt this would help avoid it becoming a dry topic. I also had concerns regarding accessibility for all children, especially lower ability and SEN pupils. I tried to counter this by basing activities

around mixed ability group work, with much discussion and by reducing the amount of written work required. Activities tended to require whole group responses using collective notes, with the generated ideas usually brought together at the end in a whole class format. With hindsight, these initial doubts were not surprising as I do not believe the research process is an easy one to understand, even for adults.

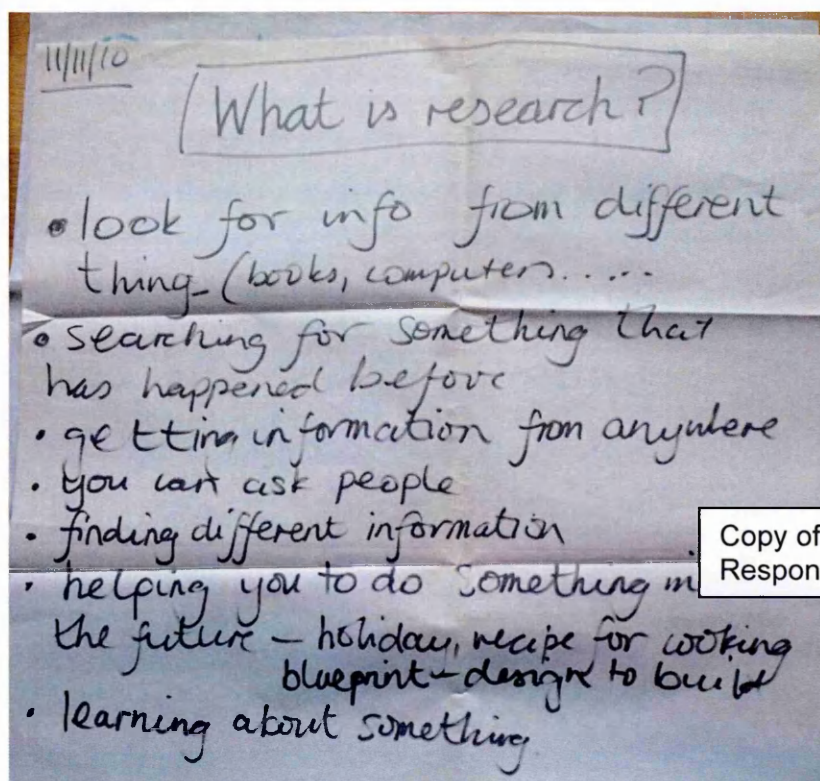
As I delivered the first session to one class (Class A) based fairly closely on the proposed session, a key issue arose, that of session length. Children's concentration levels, particularly when dealing with something totally new, flagged as the session went on. As a result of this I decided to modify the proposed programme and deliver the remainder of the sessions in shorter bursts. This meant the second class, Class B, were roughly half a session behind the others and on reflection they benefitted from this delay. Children in Class A were the real guinea pigs, getting the initial session. In this respect I was able to amend and adapt the 'same' session with Class B and tailor it more to the needs of children, given the experience of the previous class. Indeed throughout, although I set out to deliver the programme as closely as possible, as I worked through, it became evident that a number of children were struggling to access the content. As a result, I made increasingly more changes, mainly aimed at simplifying the programme. This may have resulted in some dilution. However, I felt the basic focus on the proposed aims was maintained and children's understanding was enhanced. Some examples of changes I made are included in the following commentary.

During the initial sessions I found the children to be more responsive when the sessions were taught during the morning than in the afternoon, whether this was due to the children or me, I am unsure. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that there is a feeling in teaching circles that children learn better in the morning. However, Wile & Shouppe (2011) in an exploration of literature related to 'Time-of-Day' instruction and possible impact upon achievement, found there was no 'best' time for learning and that

individuals each had their own 'best' times. So, it may be that as a teacher my preferred time was morning and I may have been at my best at those times and so, gained better responses from the children, or just perceived better responses.

Session 1 – What is research?

The first session, which aimed to develop an understanding of what research was amongst the children, proved to be rather interesting. In a similar way to that of Burton et al (2010) it became apparent that children's prior understanding of research was that of acquiring information, predominantly in this case, from the secondary source of the internet, although some children did mention books. Whilst comments such as, research is 'searching for something that has happened before' indicated that some viewed research as being linked to the past and finding out about events that had already taken place, some claimed it was 'learning about something', indicating a different viewpoint (See picture, below). These views are not surprising really, given that teachers often use the phrase 'research' when referring to the kinds of activities mentioned by children.



Copy of 'What is research?
Responses – Class B

This initial session seemed to work very well in terms of widening children's views and generating enthusiasm to find out more. Kellett proposed discussion and explanation of the following four key terms:

1. Data
2. Ethical
3. Systematic
4. Sceptical

These were received enthusiastically and explored in simple ways. Children had some understanding of what data was and a reasonable idea of 'systematic', based upon previous learning with a school approach to problem solving, particularly in mathematics. However, the other two terms were totally new concepts and had to be explored in a little more depth. The notion of 'sceptical' proved a difficult term to explain to children, nonetheless the use of exaggerated poor examples led children to question and challenge certain proposals. I asked two children, in a rather forceful way, whether they agreed with my idea of extending the school day by 30 minutes. They nodded agreement, albeit a little tentatively. These 'findings' were then presented as, 'In a recent survey of Year 5 children 100% of them agreed to an extension of the school day by 30 minutes.' This gained a reaction from some, who claimed it was not fair that I had only asked two people's opinion and that I had pressurised them into answering in a certain way. Further discussion of this approach established the need to question such statements and identify how certain conclusions have been reached. It also allowed children to explore more suitable, 'fairer' methods to gather different views of the same issue. Although the 'ethical' issues within this example were discussed, similar issues were developed in further detail during a separate session. I feel these two initial sessions provided a good foundation for children and these key terms and their meanings held. Indeed, over the following sessions children made numerous independent references to them. This approach contrasted to that of Burton et al who, having established a similar starting point, used their initial session to introduce the

notion of social scientific research by exploring techniques such as interviews and questionnaires with children acting as respondents to develop their understanding.

This notion of a healthy scepticism was evident when two children were discussing a fictional newspaper report (Kellett – Photocopiable Resource 1, p.156) which contained the phrase 'experts state ...' with regard to the impact of fast food on babies. In debating the reference to 'experts', one felt it had to be true or a fact as it was stated by experts, whilst the other asked who the experts were and what they were expert in. Other children questioned some of the other statements in the report with questions that revolved around the notion of 'how do you know?' with regard to some of its claims.

Session 2 - Learning from other's research

In looking at research by other people and the structure of a research paper, I began by using a paper written by a ten-year old, Lewis Watson (2004), from the Open University Children's Research Centre website, rather than an adult research paper (Appendix 1). Firstly, it was about recycling, which I knew was a subject many children had an interest in. More importantly, it was written in language which was more easily accessible to children, it followed a clear structure and provided good exemplification of the points Kellett's session was aimed at recognising. Moreover, it highlighted the fact that a child of the same age as those in school was capable of producing such a piece and once made explicit, this elicited a positive response from children who seemed impressed that a ten year old had produced the report. Children in both classes looked at the paper and identified simple key features, which were part of the list identified by Kellett. Having established some of the key features, I gave the children an assortment of adult research reports, and followed Kellett's suggested activity of highlighting the different sections. They worked in small groups and discussed questions that focused upon the structure of the reports (Kellett (2005), p.28). In the subsequent whole group discussion, children were able to explain and establish the purpose of each identified

element, demonstrating some developing understanding of how a 'real' research report would be structured. Indeed, a number of children commented on how they would not have previously thought of writing in such a way.

Session 3 – Research ethics

For this session I followed the proposed activities more closely. Kellett presented a list of 'questionable practices in social research' (p.35), which I used as a basis for an introduction to try to explain the notion of ethics. This element was very much teacher-directed, as I provided an explanation of the examples, particularly where the language proved difficult to comprehend. I also used examples of unethical practice to illustrate how research could fall short of expectations to further support children's understanding. Kellett further suggested a role play around an ethical dilemma (p.35) concerning a terminally ill child and potential treatment. For this activity, we used the dilemma, but children considered the possible differing points of view of the proposed participants within small groups. Each group presented its ideas to the class leading into a class discussion of the issues raised.

I finished the session by asking the children how they felt ethical issues could affect their research. This was considered in groups and the following comments, which indicate a developing understanding of ethics, were representative of the responses:

- When we want people to take part in anything we have to let them have a choice, you can't make them do it.
- If you ask someone to do something for you you have to show them respect.
- We shouldn't do anything that gets personal, as it could get people upset.
- Let them know that what they say is confidential because they could be scared to say things if they think it will be told to other people.

(Comments from group notes, 16.10.10)

Session 4 - Framing a research question

Both classes used the 'framing a question' worksheet from the Kellett book (p.159), which developed a 'funnelling' technique to help children in mixed groups move from a general idea to more focused one within the general subject. This seemed to work very well and children started from interests or general ideas and worked through a series of stages to outline a question. For example, one group began with sports and playing, eventually funnelling down to a question regarding playtimes and the activities children were engaged in, or would like to be given the right circumstances. (See Appendix 2 for completed examples). This approach provides a contrast to that of Burton et al. (2010, p.96), where classes 'chose' a single subject for research, seemingly based upon staff choice:

Staff in one school had for some time been planning a refurbishment of the playground and so "playground refurbishment" became the topic of their action research project.

Sessions 5 and 6 – Questionnaires and surveys

Although my original aim was to deliver the key initial sessions to allow the development of a basic understanding of research and different data collection techniques, this plan was changed as the children in both classes veered towards a questionnaire type approach to data collection. As a result, I concentrated more on this approach spending two sessions developing ideas. In a similar way Burton et al (2010) reported that pupils in both schools decided to gather data through structured questionnaires, as these could be administered to large numbers of informants over a relatively short period of time and it was felt that data would be relatively easy to summarise and analyse. This preference for questionnaires could relate to the fact that most children had experience of collecting data in similar ways, for example, via surveys designed to collect information at a very simple level and usually for the purpose of generating some sort of graph, table or chart. Most suggested it as an approach based around previous experience and the notion that 'if you want to know

something, you ask.’ In this instance it appeared that school mathematics had introduced children to an aspect of the research process and could help explain their receptivity to this approach. I felt it was important to build upon this position, but also to clarify a few issues around previous work, which was essentially about children choosing favourites from a given list. Thus it was important to make explicit the potential make-up of a good questionnaire. So, the focus here turned to developing open-ended questions and unbiased statements to allow responses using a Likert scale.

I worked with both classes to produce a draft questionnaire, taking the same approach with each one. Having previously identified possible research questions, I suggested we take one of those to create a class questionnaire, so as to involve the children in a scaffolded approach. From a list of possibilities each class voted (their idea) to select the most popular choice and the following options were decided upon:

Class A – What makes a good teacher?

Class B - What do you think about the playground?

Once the areas had been chosen I led a general discussion around the topics to generate children’s thoughts and then asked them to create their own questions, working in small groups. I had to explain that they needed to turn their questions into statements to fit in with the use of the choices for answers. Groups then fed back at the end and agreed on the questions they would use. Some children, not surprisingly, had found it difficult to change questions into statements, so I modelled this approach to the point where it seemed the vast majority had acquired some grasp. Both classes decided they would like to ask some questions, as they felt the responses would not be forthcoming from a simple Likert-based questionnaire (Class A created an accompanying sheet with additional questions).

Some children from both classes recognised the ethical issue of allowing anonymity for respondents, claiming children would probably be happier to respond ‘honestly’ if they

did not have to put their name on the form. Further discussion around this topic raised the areas of age and gender as possible factors, so, with a little prompting, it was agreed children completing the forms would not be asked to put their names on, but would be asked to state their gender and their year group. I had also mentioned to them that it was important to guide the person completing the form, thus it was also agreed to include an example first statement, with an understandable response, to show how to complete the questionnaire. Consequently, each class produced draft versions (Appendix 3) to be used during the following spring term. This approach of producing an initial draft version reflected that of Burton et al, who carried out a similar small scale pilot, to identify any problems or issues with questionnaires, thus allowing for amendments to be made prior to a full scale consultation.

General points

Comments made by a number of children and the work they produced indicated that at this stage they were beginning to develop a better understanding of what research was, and certainly much different to what they thought at the outset, recognising it as much more than using the internet or generating 'yes/no' data for a mathematical graph. Indeed, some children demonstrated quite sophisticated ideas and thinking when discussing possible approaches and designing questions. Certain children seemed to stand out, although not always children considered as more able academically, not surprisingly these children seemed to demonstrate an enjoyment and enthusiasm. This was evident with several children approaching me in corridors informally and discussing possible ideas or asking what was coming next. This offers a contrast and potential advantage to the position of Burton et al, who, as visiting researchers were restricted to set times for being in school. In this case, being 'native' to the school seemed to offer a benefit.

4.3 Establishment of the research group

After the taught research programme in Year 5, I spoke with the children in each class about my proposals to establish a research group and explained what the purpose of that group would be. I mentioned that it would look into further methods of research and give children the opportunity to carry out their own research. I also mentioned the course I was undertaking and the role the research group would play in that. Following my explanation I asked if children had any questions. Both classes asked similar questions mainly linked to the timing and place of group meetings, although some questions focused on what sorts of things they would be doing. I went on to explain that if they wished to take part I would need both their written permission and that of their parents. The reaction of some children seemed to indicate they felt this a little strange, several had puzzled facial expressions, whilst one girl asked why I needed this permission. I explained that it related to an external research project, which required such a step to be taken. Their reaction was not really surprising as, other than when attending trips or visits when parents would be asked for consent, as children it is unlikely that they had previously been asked to agree to participate in such a way. The issue was probably further accentuated by my position of headteacher, as I would normally be free to work with children on the school premises without their or their parents' permission. Children were asked to collect a letter (Appendix 4) which explained the process to parents if they themselves were interested in taking part. I felt this approach offered children the initial choice as to whether or not they became involved as, despite the fact that I accepted that parental permission was required, I wanted the children to have the first option. I was aware that a very small number could have been pressurised into participation by their parents, and I wanted to avoid this.

For those children who expressed an interest by taking a letter, I asked them to try to explain to parents what we had been doing in school and what they felt the group would be about, along with their reasons for wanting to take part. Whilst this may have increased pressure on some children (indeed, it may have put some off), I felt that their

explanation would help them clarify why they wished to take part. Furthermore, the letter itself signposted parents to me if they had any further questions or points needing clarification. The use of letters in school never proves to be 100% reliable and this was illustrated when a child approached me for a third letter having mislaid the previous two. Whilst his persistence was rewarded, I wonder whether any others may have lost letters but didn't ask for replacements; maybe they were just not that interested or possibly afraid to ask.

The process of returning letters took a while, although one boy, who had not always shown great interest in school, did surprise me by eagerly thrusting his letter into my hand on the playground before school the morning after they had been given out. When all letters had been returned a research group of 17 children was established. Interestingly, one letter was returned refusing parental permission, which may suggest that the child wished to take part but the parent overrode that wish, although I did not follow this up. The slow return of letters coupled with a residential week for the year group also hampered the progress I expected to make with the group. The final group of 17 was made up of 10 children from one class and 7 from another, reflecting a fairly even split across the two, with a good mix of socio-economic backgrounds. Of the 17 children only 3 were boys and this has some implications with regard to the inclusiveness of the group, whilst providing an area for further investigation to establish why some boys do not feel they wish to take part in such a group. I did make it explicit that others could join the group at a later point, in much the same way that I explained children were free to stop taking part at any stage of the process. Indeed, three additional children did join, two of them boys.

Ethical considerations

Having discussed the work around permission, I feel that this is a good point to explain the wider ethical matters I had to take, as the study moved into this next phase. Morrow and Richards (1996) emphasised the need for ethical considerations to be borne in

mind throughout the research process and not just something to be got out the way at the outset. Alderson (1995) devised a clear framework based around ten ethical topics with eighty associated questions. Hill (2010) simplified this approach and reduced the number of linked questions and I used this version to assess my own proposed work, with particular reference to the initial stages and the establishment and development of a research group. The following table represents my position:

Table 2 - Ethical considerations

Topic	Comment
1. Research Process	I felt the research could offer potential benefits to children, both those involved as researchers and as possible outcomes from findings. I accept this as a subjective view that needed to be borne out over the project.
2. Costs and benefits	For those children involved in the research group a cost or benefit, dependent upon their viewpoint, could have been the withdrawal from some lesson time to take part and the use of sessions outside of normal school times. These sessions were presented as optional, choice was on-going. Further potential benefits included the development of research skills and potential personal benefits such as raised self-esteem and confidence.
3. Privacy and confidentiality	The confidentiality of all children taking part was guaranteed, with no one being made recognisable in any report.
4. Inclusion and exclusion	I chose Year 5 as the basis for the research group in line with the proposed use of Kellett's research programme. It also meant the children would be in school over a two-year period to undertake their own work. The element of choice raised issues of who was involved, for example, the initial research group of 20 included only 5 boys, although it did contain a good mix of different socio-economic backgrounds and 'quieter' girls.
5. Funding	The research was not funded by any 'tainted' source. There were no intentions to recompense children financially for taking part.
6. Involvement and accountability	Children would be fully involved in designing the eventual research methods and areas to be researched.
7. Information	The aims and implications were clearly explained to children verbally and in writing, as well as in writing to parents (they were also offered the opportunity to discuss matters further with me if required).
8. Consent	Children as researchers were all offered the choice as to whether or not they wished to take part and consent was sought from both children and parents. The right to withdraw at any point along the way was made explicit. School governors were consulted prior to the study and their consent sought.
9. Dissemination	The intent from the outset was for children to be fully involved in presenting the findings of the project and its wider dissemination, if applicable.
10. Impact on children	At the outset I realised that this needed to be borne in

	mind and I aimed to assess the impact as an on-going process throughout the study. The role of the research group was to ensure children's perspectives were conveyed accurately.
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Research group – first task

Following the half term of taught sessions and the generation of questionnaires and surveys, the first task of the research group was to use the questionnaires and surveys from the class work to carry out a pilot study to assess their suitability. As each class produced a separate piece of work, the group decided to ask the other class to pilot their work. The main point of the completion of the questionnaire/survey was to find ways to improve it, so children were asked to comment on the actual survey once they had done it. The research group used these responses to work on final versions to carry out a fuller survey with a larger group of respondents. Comments on the two different versions were fairly similar, however, for this study I will look in particular at the playground questionnaire (Appendix 3), as this was an area the research group indicated an interest in working further on.

Children completing the questionnaire (25.11.10) made a number of comments particularly focused on the ease with which it could be completed,

- 'It was easy to fill in and had good questions.'
- 'It was easy.'
- 'Your questionnaire was not perfect but the questions were easy and they were not too complicated so it was ok not perfect.'

Some seemed to see the ease of completion as a problem, reflecting a typical 'school attitude', where questions should really present a challenge. Similarly, the need for more writing was highlighted by some comments.

- 'You could make it better by putting harder questions.'
- 'I think it is good but it needs more writing.'

Certain children noticed that questions almost duplicated themselves,

- 'It was a simple questionnaire, but some of the questions are the same.'

- 'I think you have asked the same question twice.'

Yet, as one member of the research group pointed out, by asking questions in slightly different ways you can find out whether people answer in the same way or change their mind. Some comments focused on the style and layout of the actual questionnaire and made suggestions for improvement.

- 'You could have a few more lines for writing on.'
- 'The instructions were clear to read and it was easy to do.'
- 'I would have changed it by putting more questions like eg (would you like the playground to change.) It was pretty simple.'

The pilot questionnaire was reviewed and used with other children out on the playground, along with photographic and observational work.

Photographic methods

At this point I decided to introduce the idea of using photographic approaches, as part of the on-going programme of teaching children different data collection methods.

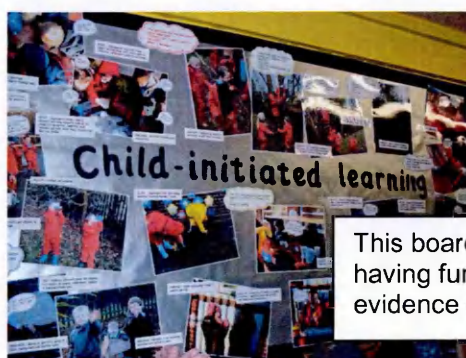
Having thus far concentrated on questionnaires, I chose photographic methods at this juncture because I felt it offered a different approach, one which I felt would appeal to children and could help children who were not keen or good writers. Furthermore, it seemed to be a developing method that had been used successfully in other studies with children (Clark 2010, Einarrsdottir 2005 and O'Brien & Moules 2007).

I introduced the approach of using photographs as a method to help to get people to provide opinions and thoughts on areas being researched. We discussed how this may happen, brainstormed some ideas and identified some possible areas for investigation around school. I felt it would be beneficial for children to try the approach for themselves and see how it worked and how they could then use it with others. Children then formed four self-selected groups and chose an area to investigate and provide their opinions and thoughts using photographs, with a view to outlining things they liked or disliked or things they thought could be improved. As it was a trial of the approach, I

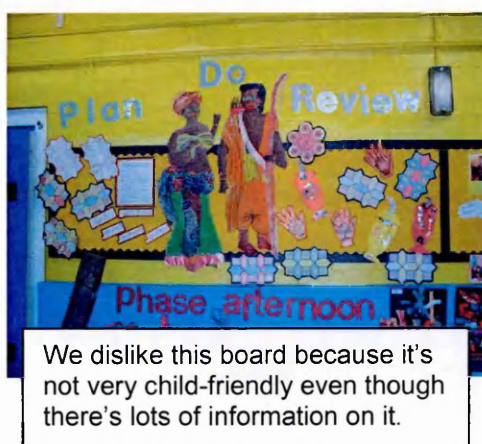
also asked them to bear in mind whether or not the use of photographs represented a good way to get different viewpoints across. In this instance I asked them to choose parts of the school for their work, as they would be easily accessible and they selected the following areas:

- The playground
- The dining room
- Learning in classrooms
- Corridor displays

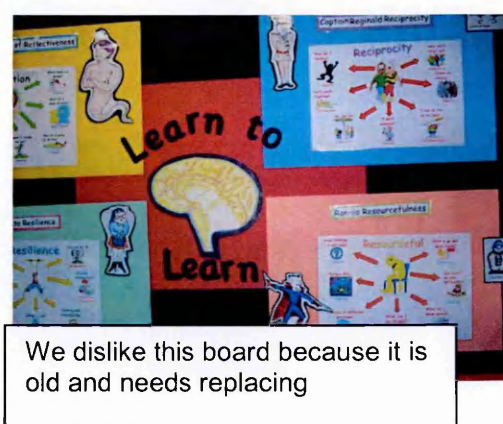
Between the four groups they took well over 100 photographs, from which each group made a selection (no limit was put on the amount) for inclusion in a booklet which the children called 'Visual research using photography by Year 5 children at Hilltop Primary School'. This contained 55 photographs, accompanied by an on-going commentary of children's thoughts and opinions and was used as part of a corridor display to illustrate the work of the research group. The following are some examples of the children's work and comments from the booklet:



This board displays children having fun and it also shows evidence of different learning skills



We dislike this board because it's not very child-friendly even though there's lots of information on it.



We dislike this board because it is old and needs replacing



This is our quiet area. We think it could be a lot better. We would like a shelter on the bottom of the bank that is big enough to play in with seats, bins, table and a box of games. It needs to be big, light so children can sit or play.



This is where we think a new shelter should be built.

The group looking at learning in classrooms had a photograph of the children working along with some displays and made the following comment:

'The children where planning a holiday which included maths skills, literacy skills and lots of working together.

Children have lots of things around the class to help them learn e.g. simple steps, VCOP and awards and lots of evidence of children's work.

BUT the work is a little cramped up together which does not help children to find it as well.'

The group examining the dining room contrasted the start of lunch with the end, showing a 'nice clean and tidy dining room, at the start of lunch' with 'a very messy dining room at the end, with food all over the floor.' They also noted that the 'kitchen staff have to work very hard to tidy up at the end of each lunch time.'

Comments

The examples above are representative of the work of the children and I feel the comments made demonstrated not only a good level of thinking, but were also quite insightful. The children made further comments regarding the method, with some seeing distinct advantages over other methods:

It is good because it lets you give your own view or opinion, it is freer and more fun and you don't have to always be good at reading or writing. (Mia, 10.02.11)

There did appear to be some confusion as to how the method would be used when researching other's views. Some certainly seemed to think it would mean using photographs within a survey or questionnaire,

If you take a picture it doesn't always tell you much. So, if you give people some questions with a picture they can understand better. (Leanne and Chantal, 10.02.11)

Although potentially this could be a way to improve a questionnaire through the use of more visual stimuli to support understanding, indeed it was an avenue some children explored further in their later work. The use of photographs certainly seemed to be popular with children who appreciated the different way in which opinions and thoughts could be presented. The following comment seems to indicate that children saw it as a useful tool to be used alongside other methods, 'We think photos are a useful way to get opinions, but you need other information as well.' (On further questioning the 'other information' seemed to be some form of written work to explain the photograph.) (Mel and Brad, 10.02.11).

4.4 Playground research project

Following on from this, a meeting was held with the research group where the children decided to continue their research into children's views of the playground. Here roles were finalised for the further collection of data. One group of three girls arrived with a set of questions they had written prior to the meeting and asked if they would be able to conduct interviews with their peers. Through a discussion of possible approaches, based heavily on the previous work, the following four choices emerged:

- Questionnaires
- Interviews
- Observations
- Photographs

At this point I considered whether or not to teach further whole group sessions on observation and interview techniques. The children were keen and somewhat impatient, to get on with their group projects and so, having gone through a phase of what could be described as 'front-loaded training', I felt a move towards a more work-based learning approach was appropriate at this point. It seemed that the children needed to apply some of the skills they had been taught. Considering further taught sessions, as the groups considering each approach seemed to have clear ideas about what they wanted to do, I decided that I would support them individually through a practical experience. On reflection, whole group sessions may have been a good idea as they would have opened up possibilities for all participants; the issues did have to be addressed at a later stage anyway. It was at this point that my role began to clearly incorporate that of supervisor, as each group had an individual follow-up meeting with me to clarify their methods and identify a clear approach. Each group then followed their own lines of inquiry, using me as a reference point or sounding board; the role I played here is evidenced within the commentary for each group, below.

Interview group

The interview group consisted of 6 girls, including the three who had created questions ahead of the previous meeting (Appendix 5). The group decided they would like to interview a boy and girl together from each of the eight classes in Key Stage 2 to gain views across the age range. They also decided to work in pairs with one asking questions and the other making notes to record the responses.

Findings and reflections

The children's analysis of their interviews led them to make the following conclusions based predominantly on issues linked to gender:

- Boys and girls have different views of the playground.

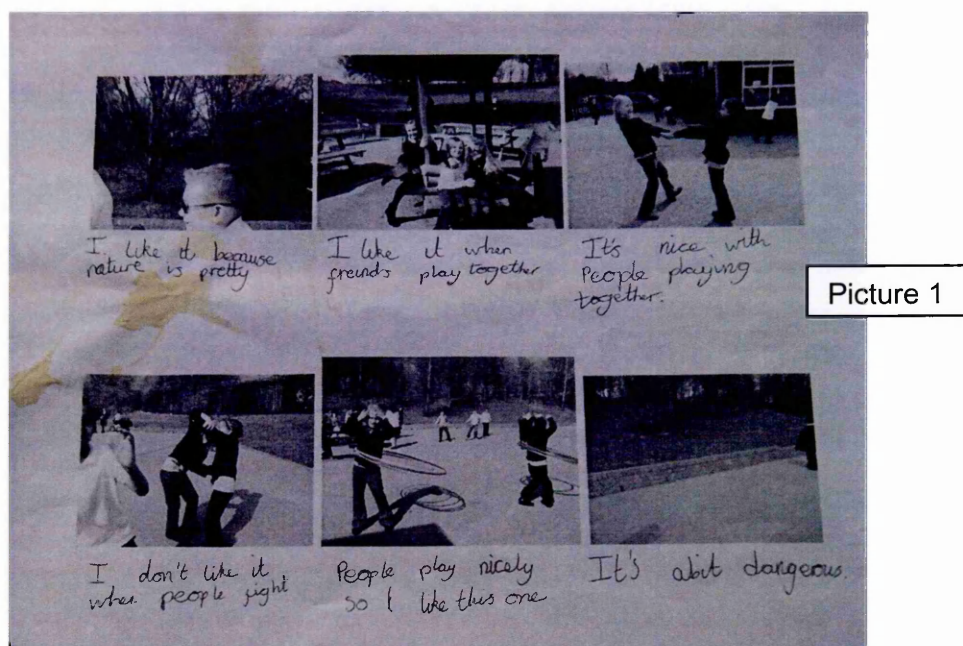
- Boys seem to have a more limited focus, as they apparently 'only seem bothered with football', whilst girls liked 'lots of different things' and played a wider variety of games.
- Boys are less-eco-friendly – based on the responses from some that 'trees should be cut down to make the play area bigger.'

The children recognised a need to 'do more interviews to get as many opinions as possible', showing some awareness of their limited evidence base. Whilst the three points are a little sweeping, given this small evidence base, nevertheless they demonstrated an ability to make some sort of deduction. They also reflected on the process itself, feeling that if repeated they would like to interview children individually, as they felt that some respondents just 'copied the person next to them.' They also felt they would like to change their questions, although at this point they were unsure about what they would alter. Following their initial round of interviews one of them commented on the opinions presented by a Year 4 girl who liked playing football, stating that 'we need to interview some more girly girls' as this view didn't seem to fit the researcher view that games of football often dominated playground activity. This opened a discussion regarding their ethical position and the need for researchers to remain unbiased.

Photograph group

This group was made up of three girls and a boy. At the initial meeting I shared an article by Clark (2010), which explored the need for a clear research question to present to the children taking part. Using Clark's question, 'What does it mean to be in this place?' as a foundation they agreed on the focus being on what children liked and disliked about playtime and the playground. They dismissed the idea of exploring merely what children did, as they felt their questions offered children a better opportunity to express an opinion. When deciding upon participants, they discussed a variety of methods for the selection of the children to be interviewed, ranging from 'let the teacher pick' to picking 'someone who doesn't do a lot already,' before finally

agreeing on randomly drawing names from a pot containing the whole class' names. Having selected photographers they explained what they were intending to do and asked them to take a selection of photographs to demonstrate their likes and dislikes. Once taken, six photographs were selected by each participant and pasted onto a single sheet of paper. The researchers then asked the children to explain their choices and made notes of their comments alongside the photographs (Picture 1).



Findings and reflections

Although the method turned out to be rather time-consuming, the researchers were able to make some tentative conclusions from the analysis of their results. The processing time for downloading and creating the comment sheets and the subsequent follow-up with individuals, required considerably more time than some other methods. There were some technical issues as children were unable to use portable storage devices in the ICT suite, so did most of their work in my office using my machine with its open access. In these instances I offered technical support to get their ideas and format in a usable form. A key theme to emerge was that the children's photographs highlighted the purely social aspect of playtimes. One set of photos and comments from a Year 4 boy, drew the reflection that 'a lot of his good things are about playing

and being with his friends', whilst another from a Year 4 girl was 'all her good things are about playing together, I think friendship's important to her.' They stated that if they repeated the exercise they would like to ask some 'why' questions to try and get respondents to explain their thoughts a little more, possibly by walking them around the playground with the photos and getting them to explain them in situ.

Questionnaire group

The questionnaire group consisted of 3 boys and 6 girls.

Discussions with the group saw a number of new issues and areas of investigation emerging, including the role of adults on the playground, the need to consider children of differing ages and the understanding of the word 'safe'. With a little further exploration, the children identified it could mean secure or accident free and so expanded the questionnaire to include both elements. The size of the group presented a number of problems, particularly with regard to decision making on the way to producing a final version of the questionnaire. There were many ideas and my role was tested, as it would have been very easy to step in and impose my own ideas upon them. It was a difficult temptation to resist and left me feeling somewhat frustrated. Eventually, having left them a while to discuss and identify a possible way forward, one girl volunteered to put all the new ideas with the previous ones to create a new questionnaire. She produced a final version which was agreed by the whole group (Appendix 3.1). It was then given to children in Years 4 and 6 to complete.

Findings and reflections

Although the initial discussions yielded new lines of enquiry, some children needed reminding that their role was that of researcher not that of researched, confusing their role by giving opinions on the playground and trying to answer questions rather than finding out others thoughts. On reflection, this highlighted the need for children to manage their own roles and provided a pointer for further discussion with whole group. When the questionnaires were completed a slight hiccup arose when a very keen child

offered to take the Year 6 returns home to tally responses, taking a week to return them, leading to a delay and reduction in analysis time. The time constraint placed on the children's work at this juncture was linked to my need to submit a report for a given date. Whether the constraint affected the outcome is questionable, but like researchers in general, the need to adhere to a timeline was another element of the children acting as researchers.

As part of a single analysis session I questioned the group about their collated results to see if they could identify any patterns or emerging themes. They focused mainly on clusters of high responses and differences in responses between girls and boys to make the following general points:

- Children generally feel the playground is suitable for all ages
- Although, most children felt there was enough equipment at dinnertime, there was a mixed response for playtime.
- Most girls felt there were enough adults on the playground whilst boys gave a more mixed response.
- The vast majority of children felt the playground was secure and felt secure when playing there.
- There were some differences of opinion, with girls generally feeling there was too much rough play whilst boys did not. A similar response was gained with regard to the playing of football on the playground.

The group felt they would like to conduct questionnaires with the two remaining year groups and see if any general themes emerged. One girl also made the comment that although 'questionnaires are good for finding out what people think about the playground now, we need to know more about what they would like to have instead.'

Observation group

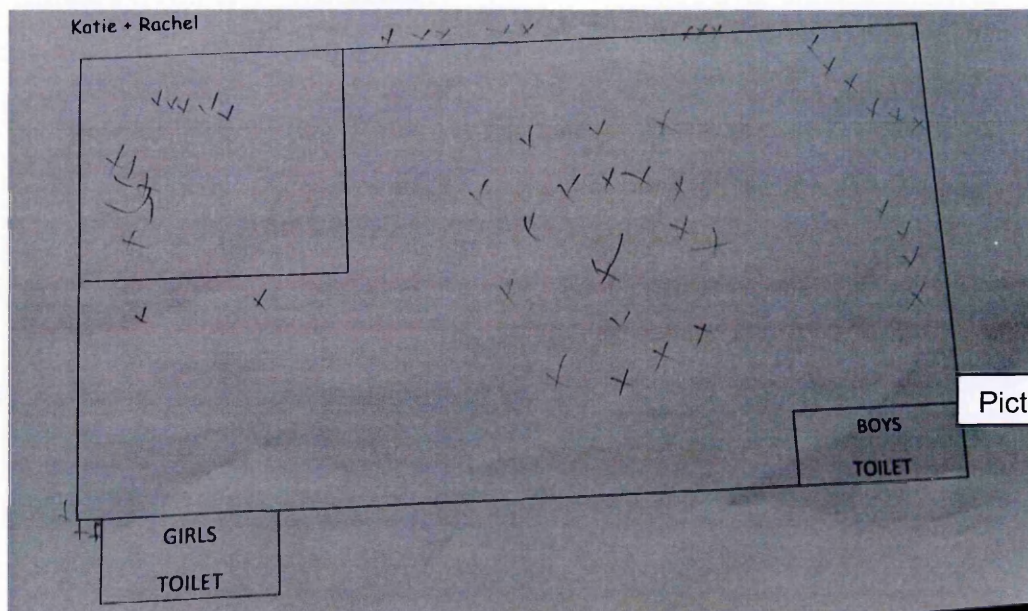
At their initial meeting with me, this group, made up of 3 girls, arrived with some very clear ideas about what they wanted to look for, focussing on the activities undertaken by children on the playground. They created tables (Appendix 6) and maps to identify

the numbers involved in various activities, the use of equipment and the areas of the playground that were used more than others. They also made observational notes of what children were doing. They carried out their observations on three days over a week.

Findings and reflections

When looking at their observations the girls noted that (10.03.11):

- 'The quiet area is used a lot.'
- 'There are always a lot of people playing football, but they don't always play properly.'
- 'Hula hoops are used through dinner, but by different people.'
- The maps of where children played showed (Picture 2) that 'people play in certain places which are very busy, but some places are quiet.' They decided they could 'put some equipment in the quiet places to try and get people to play there.'



- Interestingly, the final written observational note states, 'children are sometimes left on their own.' This prompted some discussion at the reflection stage and the group stated that they would like to further investigate 'how people treat each other and talk to each other.'

They also recognised that they would like to carry out more observations to generate more data in an attempt to increase the reliability of their observations.

Reflections

During these initial, directed projects, the focus was predominantly upon teaching children some basic research methods to see if they were able to use them in conducting their own research. It appeared from observations of the children working and some of their comments, that given the correct tools, further training and support, they would be able to undertake their own research projects. To this point they had used a range of research tools to collect relevant data and, although they had only carried out simple data analysis, they had been able to make reasoned conclusions. I believe they had also been able to demonstrate that, within the confines of this initial phase, they were able to reflect on the approaches used and even, in some instances, recognise where it could have been improved. In this respect, I believe they were beginning to move research into evaluation.

Before moving forward into the next phase, where children's research would become increasingly more independent, a number of issues had arisen that had to be borne in mind. Although the children seemed to have natural tendency towards more traditional research methods, such as interviewing and the use of questionnaires, my intention at this point was to look to expand the use of more participatory methods, begun with the photographic work, and explore a range of other participatory approaches. At this point, I recorded that some children had often voluntarily given up their time to complete research and I was keen to allow children the choice in these matters and not pressure them into completing their work. Nonetheless, this presented a dilemma in that there was an imbalance in the contributions from children, which meant some may not have developed their skills as well as others. A potential way forward would be to have developed a set of ground rules with the children that they then signed up to, although

this would have meant me taking a lead and potentially removing the on-going choice option for their involvement.

Moreover, my own role as headteacher in the school coupled with the associated issue of power had been a difficult one to manage at times. Although, the role seemed to offer benefits, when compared to a visiting researcher, particularly with regard to flexibility and my general availability for children at a variety of times, the demands of my role frequently took me out of school, meaning it was difficult to establish a regular timetable or programme for research work with the children. I struggled at times to avoid overly directing children and asserting power through the imposition of my ideas and, whilst this may have slowed progress, I felt it enabled children to take more of the decisions during the research. As an insider researcher and as headteacher, I potentially had a vested interest in the success of the children, as well as the natural desire for them not to fail. So, in trying to combat this I tried to allow children to take the lead wherever possible. My own role as researcher and teacher of research skills also appeared to be evolving becoming less directive and more supportive. This was the point where I felt it could be likened more to that of a supervisor in that I supported, questioned and only when it appeared unavoidable, instructed children.

4.5 The research group and their own projects

In the preliminary phases I had directed children towards areas of school life for investigation and so it was not necessarily surprising that at the next phase, where children were asked to select their own topics for research, they chose a variety of issues relating to aspects of schooling. Following a whole group brainstorm to identify possible areas, children were asked to organize themselves into groups to discuss them. In the main, they established friendship groups so that by the end of September twenty three children were involved in seven groups expressing an interest in investigating the following areas:

- The eco agenda within school

- Reading and the school library
- Other peoples' view of school
- How could school clubs be improved
- Learning in the classroom
- How could learning be improved
- One undecided

What soon became evident at this point was the fact that although children had ideas, few had obvious specific points of focus for their work. This was one of a number of features which mirrored my own progress through the research process. During a discussion, some children recalled the funnelling sheet, which had been used during the original taught sessions, so a follow-up session was arranged and children tried to clarify and focus their investigations to concentrate upon specific issues. As a result of this and a number of individual discussions with groups, the following topics and investigation questions were decided upon:

- School clubs - What do children think of school clubs? How could they be improved?
- Eco agenda – How do children influence the eco agenda in school? Are their views really listened to and acted upon?
- Classrooms - How do school classrooms help children to learn? How could they be improved? – (An individual girl who asked to conduct separate research alongside her group who were looking at views of school from the outside)
- Learning - What makes learning fun? (2 groups)
- How could lessons in school be improved?
- Reading habits of children – What encourages children to read? Who do children like to read to?
- What do other people think of our school?

- Building Learning Power² - Is BLP useful to you? How do you use BLP?

The discussions with the groups took a similar format and I will use the eco group's development to illustrate this. Although they knew they wanted to investigate within the area of what they called 'eco issues in school', they were unclear as to a more precise area for investigation. So, to drill down to a more specific focus I met with the group and questioned them to try and identify potential areas for investigation. I tried to keep my questions as open as possible to get the children to raise specific issues. We discussed a range of issues relating to school and eventually they mentioned that despite there being some eco groups in school they still felt that many issues raised and ideas suggested by the children were simply ignored. From this position, they were able to establish that they wanted to find ways for children to have more influence over what they referred to as 'the eco agenda' and keep its profile as high as possible. They decided they would investigate the following questions:

- How can children influence the eco agenda at school?
- Do children think their views are listened to?

Although this was to be done with regard to the eco agenda, I felt their research and potential findings could have wider implications for the way children's views are sought, listened to and acted upon across the school. In some ways the group's focus seemed to reflect in microcosm a number of the issues identified within the difficulties of pupil voice as a whole.

Whilst the general ideas identifying areas originated from the children, my questioning provided direction in turning the general topics into questions to be researched. I attempted to minimize my influence in directing children along routes reflecting my own beliefs and thoughts by careful questioning, teasing out what they were actually interested in finding out about. On reflection, I was probably more successful at this in

² Building Learning power (BLP) is a concept developed by Professor Guy Claxton which aims to help young people to become better learners, both in school and out by creating a culture in classrooms - and in the school more widely - that systematically cultivates habits and attitudes that enable young people to face difficulty and uncertainty calmly, confidently and creatively. In school this ends up with 17 learning capacities or skills being identified which are exemplified and made explicit to children to enable them to recognise the skills in themselves.

some instances than others. For example, as described above, the children looking at the eco agenda in school began with strong feelings regarding children's influence and in this case, I feel I merely helped them frame their question. In contrast to this, the group hoping to investigate reading in school were more focused upon the preferred authors of children, so I feel I may have pushed them a little into finding out what it is that motivates children to read. (Not surprisingly, in their later work they returned to their original focus and rather ignored my suggestion.)

4.6 Methods used by children

At this point in my study the children took on more of the direction of their own projects and as such, my approach became far more unstructured and my position increasingly became that of supervisor, responding to individual groups. In a sense, my role at this point seemed to almost take on a dual, yet contrasting, position. As the children moved to the fore, in one sense, I made a shift from being an active member of the research team, to become more of an observer commenting on their research in a more peripheral position, yet in other ways, as supervisor, I still felt like some sort of fulcrum around which the children's work was operating.

Throughout the process the children showed they were capable of using a range of methods to collect their data, although as I have already stated, there was a tendency to rely upon methods with which they gained a certain familiarity, such as questionnaires and interviews. At varying times a number of groups and individuals expressed the view or a similar version, that 'if we want to find out then the easiest thing to do is just ask people.' Within this I felt that my role was to help them understand the need for certain things when carrying out their work. Therein I suppose I was offering on-going, bespoke 'training' in research, in a different way to the initial taught programme; this was a clear element of my role at this stage of my work. We had discussed the difficult concept of ethics and ethical research during the initial stages of the research programme and this proved a useful example to attempt to

enhance the children's understanding. I was able to develop the theme to cover issues such as avoiding bias or using leading questions, avoiding personal issues and the need for anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity within the children's work proved an extremely difficult issue to ensure, as children are too highly accustomed to putting their name on every loose piece of written work. On several occasions, even when no name was asked for, the children completing questionnaires insisted on writing their name on the paper.

I also felt it was important for children to realise that 'just asking' could take different forms, so, during discussions when they said they would like to ask, I challenged them to explain how they would ask. What most children described was some form of interview. As a result, I got the whole group together and ran a taught session looking at interviews. I feel this helped to establish that there were different ways to ask questions regarding interviewing children. We looked at the approaches using set questions or more open, theme-based questions which allowed respondents greater freedom in their responses. In this way, the children began to develop a rudimentary understanding of the difficult concepts of structured, semi-structured and more open interviews and questioning.

There were a number of changes made to the children's questioning, sometimes following my input, generally through questions that got children thinking about potential responses, and sometimes through a more direct approach. There were also a number of occasions when children themselves were able to recognise ways to improve the questions they were asking. A simple example of a change was when Mitchell and Brad, as part of a series of questions around attitudes to learning, wanted to ask,

'Who is your favourite/least favourite teacher?'

'Why do you like/dislike them?'

We discussed the notion of ethics linked to raising personal issues and eventually they came up with,

‘What makes a good teacher?’

‘What makes a bad teacher?’

I felt they could have changed the second question for something like, ‘What makes a teacher not so good?’, however, I didn’t challenge them further, as they had certainly progressed from their initial position and I was cautious of over-directing them. Maybe, this point also illustrates the straightforward simplicity with which children can work, unhindered by the sensitivities of adults.

The example of Louise and Rebecca shows a different approach to changes being made. Their journal entry highlights the observation that they began with a simple questionnaire, questioning highlighted the fact they both felt that they would like to refine it after a few trials.

AFTER WE STARTED WE MADE A BASIC QUESTIONNAIRE. THEN WE ASKED A FEW CHILDREN KS2, THEY OFFERED TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS, WE DIDN’T FORCE THEM TO.

WE INTERVIEWED THREE PEOPLE FROM CLASS 15 ... THEY SAID THAT THEY LIKE BLP BUT COULD MAKE THE BLP SKILLS BETTER THAN THEY ARE ... WE LOOKED AT THE ANSWERS AND THOUGHT WE COULD GET MORE FROM PEOPLE IF WE ASKED BETTER QUESTIONS. SO WE CHANGED OUR QUESTIONS A BIT TO GET MORE DETAILED ANSWERS. Children’s report, July 2012)

(The fact that they note they didn’t force anyone to take part also indicates a simple ethical understanding that participants should choose to take part.)

The following represents the stages they went through and the changes they made before arriving at their final version. I believe this progression illustrates the ability of the children to consider their own questioning and improve it to arrive at a final set of questions that are some way removed from their first attempt. Whilst the number of open questions does not necessarily increase, I believe the questions have a better

structure, being progressive and more clearly linked to their original questions of 'Is BLP useful to you?' and 'How do you use BLP?' Although they visited me during the process to ask for advice, they were certainly responsible for the recognition that a change was required, the direction of the change and the tighter focus in the final product.

Version 1:
What do you think BLP is?
Is BLP useful?
How do you use BLP?
Is it useful at home?

Version 2:

Questionnaire

- What is your favourite BLP skill?
- What do you like about BLP and why?
- How can you improve on BLP?
- Do you use BLP at home and at school?
- How can you rate a BLP skill?

Version 3:

BLP Questions

- What is your favourite BLP skill?
- Is it useful at home and at school?
- How do you use it?
- Do you enjoy using BLP skills?
- Do you think BLP skills are worth the time and energy? Why?
- If you could choose a new BLP skill what would it be and why?

Despite a tendency for children to stick with certain methods, some developed or tried to develop their own ideas as they went along. A number used photographs in questionnaires, where photographs were used to help generate a response. For example, Katrina and Chelsey included several photographs to try and get people's opinions of things around school using simple, open questions aimed at respondents commenting on what they could see. This was also a technique used later by Mel, when she created a photo questionnaire to send out to pupils in a different school. (Although, Mel's friends had agreed, and in fact encouraged her to involve them, my reaction was one of concern, as I felt it widened the area of research and thus, introduced potential ethical issues.) At one point the eco group also mentioned the

possible use of photographs showing different areas of school for children to comment on, although they didn't use them in their questioning.

The following example highlights the typical use of photographs to get participants to give an opinion on something shown within a

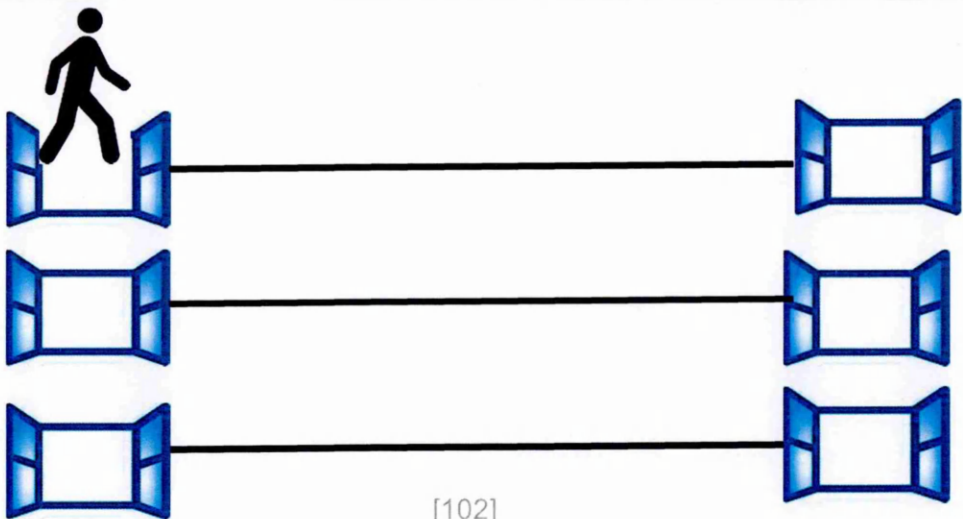
What do you think of our Junior Library?



Katrina and Chelsey also developed what they called a 'tightrope' for children to order preferences. They called it 'Tightropes, as the overall image looks like a tightrope!' The explanation of how it works and diagram below were part of the sheet they used with children. This was an idea they had come up with during a visit to each other's home and was produced totally independently of me.

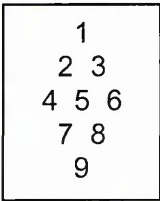
Please look at the following things that you should find in your classrooms: BLP, Questions, Targets, Colourful objects, Questions. Once you are happy that you know these please look below. Next to the man please write the thing above that you think most helps you in your learning. Once you have done this please write the one you think is second most important on the first 'tightrope'. Then please do the one you think is third most important on the second tightrope, then the fourth most important on the third tightrope. Thank you for doing this and please hand back to Chelsey!

Please look at the following things that you should find in your classrooms: BLP, Questions, Targets, Colourful objects, Questions. Once you are happy that you know these please look below. Next to the man please write the thing above that you think most helps you in your learning. Once you have done this please write the one you think is second most important on the first 'tightrope'. Then please do the one you think is third most important on the second tightrope, then the fourth most important on the third tightrope. Thank you for doing this and please hand back to Chelsey!

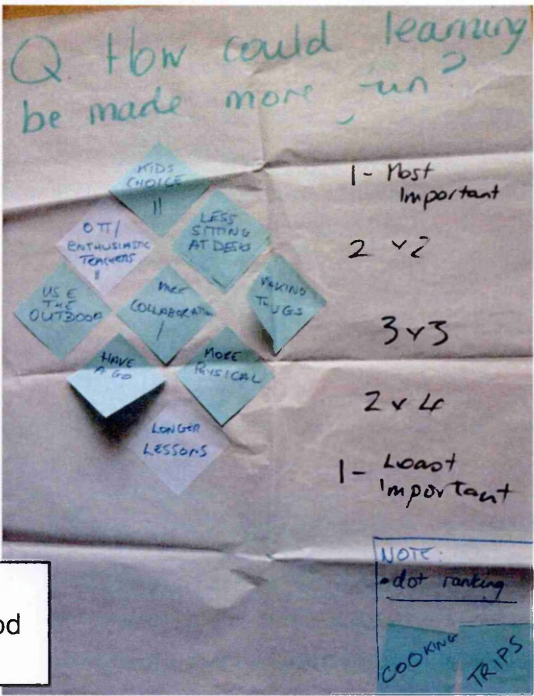


Louise and Rebecca decided they wanted to develop a word search containing BLP related words along with a 1, 2, 3 rating or smiley, indifferent and sad faces to help them gather children’s views. They indicated they would get children to attempt the word search prior to asking their questions. Although they didn’t explain their reasoning initially and I felt it was maybe a way to merely create some fun for their participants, it turned out they believed the word search would actually help to stimulate and focus children’s thinking on BLP prior to them asking their more specific questions. In this way they hoped to generate more depth to any responses they received.

A potential issue I had whilst acting in the supervisor role, was finding the balance between advising on approaches so children made a decision for themselves, and providing too much of a steer so they moved away from their preferred method into something that was ultimately my choice. So, when Mia and Chantal, who took ‘How can lessons be improved?’ as their question, visited me to discuss gathering data I decided to introduce them to the ‘diamond 9’ ranking system. This involves placing a variety of options in preference order in the shape of a diamond, as follows (With 1 as the first preference ranking down to 9, as the least preferred option. The system allows for more than 9 options to be presented with the lowest preferences being excluded from the ranking altogether):



Photograph of flipchart demonstrating how the method was used.



They appeared interested in the method and said they would try it out. Following what they felt was a successful trial they demonstrated the method to the rest of the group so that others could use it if they so wished (they also gained some useful data from their peers in the process). I feel in this instance my intervention and steer was probably justified and turned out well as the girls gained some useful data over the next few weeks. They also felt worked well with some of the younger children, as they provided the options for them to rank, rather than expecting them to generate their own ideas. Furthermore, the method was taken up by at least two of the other groups within their own research, so in this way there was an impact on the work of others through the provision of a new method.

Chapter 5 - Data analysis

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I looked at how children were able to use given methods and adapt them for their own uses, as well as how, in some cases, they developed their own methods.

The following chapter links selected data to my research questions:

- What do children need to know and do to be researchers?
- Are children able to conduct their own research?
- What can children learn from being researchers?

In doing so I also examine a number of issues that emerged during the research process, which seemed to establish a set of conditions under which children could undertake research. In this respect I offer an examination of the children's analysis and use of data, the matter of group dynamics, as well as my role as an insider researcher in the process and the associated conflicts.

Within this chapter I have used the following different font types to represent the analysis of different elements of the work.

- Arial provides the general commentary, in keeping with the font throughout the report.
- Comic sans is used to indicate where I am reflecting on the data as the researcher

(All the text and comments of children are taken verbatim from their original work – only the font size may have been changed to maintain a uniform font size)

5.2 Children generating and analysing data

I believe the following examples highlight children in control of the methods that I introduced them to, enabling them to undertake their own research. They are working towards the extreme end of the participation spectrum identified by both Holland et al (2009) and Rudduck & McIntyre (1999), where children can be seen to be setting their

own research agenda, building upon their earlier training. I have outlined the role I played as supervisor, research collaborator and headteacher, in each case highlighting my different levels of involvement. This illustrates a variety of issues from my perspective as I attempted to overcome what both Kellett (2010) and Lansdown (2010) identify as a major barrier to improving children's participation, that of adult perceptions of the children's competences, and reflect Fielding's (2011) enabling view of children's capabilities.

Some of the children's responses and actions seem to support Alderson's (2009) suggestion, that in certain ways, children are better positioned to research than adults as they see things with a more open and less restricted view. Whether, regarding her further claims, they were better placed than adults to be successful in getting responses from peers because of power and generational issues, may be questioned, although they were certainly differently placed. Children were able to demonstrate what Woodhead & Faulkner (2009) refer to as the value of social experience, which they claim carries far greater authenticity than external, second-hand views.

The group investigating school clubs visited me (23.04.12) to talk about some of the responses to their initial questionnaire and indicating that there were three preferences for clubs:

- 'sporty'
- 'relaxing' or
- 'just don't like clubs'

During this discussion Helen said, 'We've missed out something important, we need to do another to find out what clubs children would like.' She went on to explain that their original questions,

What do you like about the clubs at our school at the moment? Why?

What club do you like the most? Why?

Could we make these clubs better? How?

had focused on the existing clubs in school at the moment, rather than those clubs children would like to participate in. Two days later they returned with the following questions:

- Do you like clubs?
- What could we do to make clubs better?
- What do you like about clubs?
- What don't you like about clubs?
- What other types of clubs do you want to have in school?
- What time do you prefer clubs?

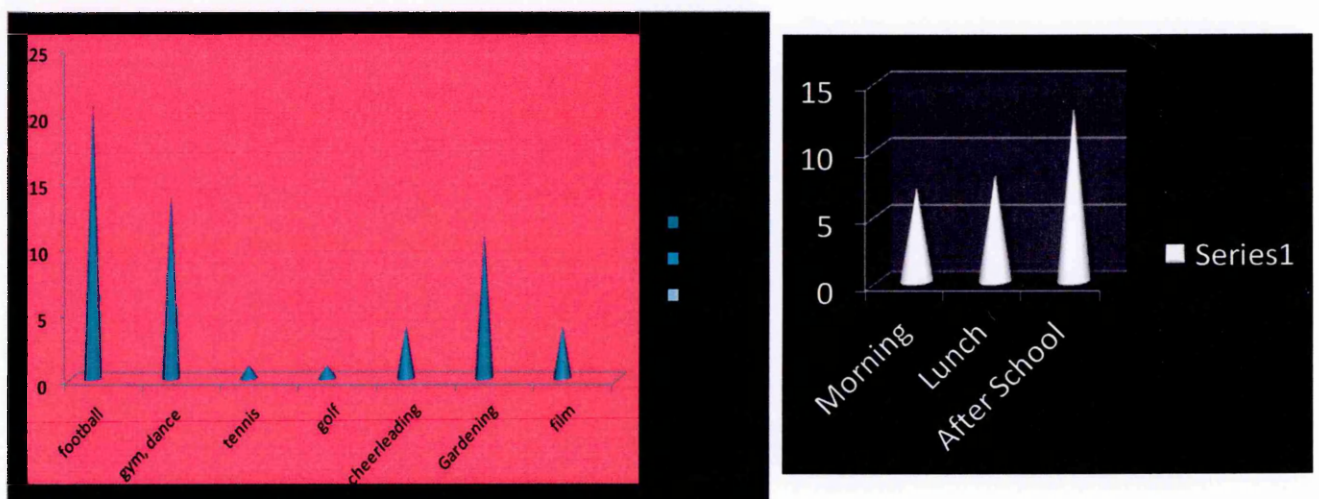
Morning Lunch After school

I felt it was noteworthy that their own analysis enabled them to recognise how the original questions wouldn't allow them to find out which clubs the children would like and that they were able to change their questions to find this out independently of my input. They removed the 'Why?' element from their original questions, which I believe initially was a response to taught sessions regarding open questions and the need to establish reasons to support further ideas. With hindsight I wish I had asked them to explain this, although it may be that they felt the second set of questions went a little further and rather than simply asking 'why?' tried to frame similar questions in a way that was easier to understand for respondents.

Their initial analysis and grouping of preferences also highlighted that not all children want to stay behind after school to participate in a club, a contrast with a typical adult-led school approach, which always seems to start from the premise that all children would like to join a school club. Furthermore, in their revised questions they considered the importance of the timing of clubs, a factor which had not really been explored by school. I suggested that they find children who

don't like clubs and try and establish why this might be the case. This seems to be my headteacher role coming to the fore with the idea that maybe children were not making the choice about attending clubs but it was parents who were instrumental in the decision - it is not always easy to return to collect children when there are siblings to collect and care for. The group didn't take up my suggestion.

Shortly after this meeting they presented some of their findings which included the following graphic information: (28 responses – 56 preferences for clubs)



They explained that their questioning indicated that 21 children would like more football clubs, making it the most preferred club and that a gym and dance club and gardening club would also prove to be popular. They also stated that although most children preferred after-school clubs, some would like clubs at other times. From a more detailed comparison of responses between a Year 3 class and a Year 6 class they made the following point:

- *It also came up that the older people don't really mind what clubs are in school and they want to mainly stay in the clubs they are in, but the younger children are more picky and they mainly want different clubs, some want some of the clubs that have been in school before. (26.04.12)*

As the headteacher I would have liked the girls to have explored these ideas a little further by establishing why certain timings were preferable or by investigating the differences between the different age groups, as this would have helped me and other staff members in school to develop new clubs. As a researcher, I was not necessarily happy with the somewhat sweeping statement regarding differences in preference between older and younger children based upon only 28 responses. Working within the education system I was also fascinated by their use of the term 'older people' to describe children in Year 6. Despite all the fashionable words used by schools to describe children in the current educational climate, throughout the process children frequently referred to themselves as just 'people'. Iona and Peter Opie noted this same trait during their observations of playground life: indeed, Opie (1993) is littered with quotes from children referring to themselves in this way.

Eve and Cheryl from the Eco group also presented some of their results in a mathematical form. They had trialled a multiple choice questionnaire within their own class and for part of their initial analysis had calculated percentages for the responses and drawn pie charts to represent them. Eve took great delight in announcing that they had spent time at home the previous evening looking at these initial responses, stating 'It took us more than two hours! ...I even had to ring my Mum and get an extra hour so we could finish it off.' (18.04.12)

Their results included the following:

What's YOUR attitude to organic food?

- a. How can you tell? (41%)
- b. I don't really understand what organic means (4%)
- c. I know it's better for the planet but I'm not that fond of organic vegetables (56%)

What do you think about cars?

- a. I worry that cars will eventually destroy the planet (15%)

- b. The bigger the better. Preferably a Formula 1 (26%)
- c. I know cars are useful, but prefer to walk or cycle for short distances (59%)

Do YOU recycle?

- a. I wouldn't use anything I couldn't eventually reuse or recycle (15%)
- b. Only because the council makes me (7%)
- c. I recycle whenever I can, as long as I know what bin to use (78%)

Based on 27 responses

Although they were pleased with the implications of this numerical analysis, as they felt it suggested that children in school were aware of eco issues, they expressed some doubt about the honesty of the responses and questioned the multiple choice approach feeling that children may just have selected what they felt was the most appropriate answer. They also stated that, 'some of the questions seem a bit complicated and tricky to understand and sometimes the right answer is obvious ... I think we should try again with just questions, but make them simpler' (19.04.12). They commented on the number of children who claimed to walk short distances yet, from their own knowledge, they were aware that 'most children in our class don't even walk to school, they get a lift.' They went on to amend their questionnaire by removing the multiple choice responses and included the following:

What is your attitude to organic food?
 What do you think about cars?
 Do you recycle? If so, how often?

To check the feeling regarding travel they included a question regarding modes of transport to school in a later questionnaire, giving a choice of responses:

How did you travel to school today?
 Train Bus Walked Car Bike Other
 (10 out of 13 respondents travelled to school by car)

In this instance the children seem to apply what Woodhead & Faulkner (2009) describe as social expertise to analyse the responses they received. Although their recognition that some of the multiple choice responses presented 'obvious' answers may just be their identifying a flaw in their initial approach, I believe their comments indicate that it is linked to an immediate knowledge of their peers which I, as an adult researcher would not have had. Besides, they had the

temerity to check out their hypothesis in the later questionnaire, which seemed to support their initial view and led to the suggestion that, 'We need to educate people more.' I believe the changes made, regardless of any social expertise, demonstrate that the group were learning about research as they were carrying it out. Whilst the later questions removed the 'obvious' answers, the question regarding cars does not directly question attitudes to car usage and potential environmental impact and was almost so open, a number of non-related responses could have been possible. Similarly, the question regarding recycling still seems to imply that it is something that respondents should be doing. In this sense as a researcher I could possibly question the children's position as it has the potential for a degree of bias to be levelled against it and seems to illustrate an advantage and disadvantage of insider research as outlined by Mercer (2007). Although the girls seem to demonstrate a possible advantage of insider knowledge through a superior knowledge of the social context, their own desire for a certain outcome within that context suggests they found it difficult to maintain an even-handed approach at times.

A further question included in their final questionnaire, which allowed for a more qualitative response, was:

If you was in charge of Eco in our school what would you do?

This elicited the following comments:

More activities or games

Do activetis about the planet and the environment

Do fun stuff about the envirement and the planet

The notion of more activities or games seemed to strike a chord with Eve and Cheryl who on a subsequent visit were highly excited about an idea they had for developing an educational game called 'TrashOlympics'.

Our aim for our group is to make the world a better place and teach younger children if you carry on like this our world will be a dump! We want to make Hilltop primary a more eco-friendly place...The Trash-Olympics is a fun and educational eco session where you play games. (Written explanation for participants, 23.04.12)

Although this was undoubtedly a very good idea and a positive spin-off from their research, I felt a little frustrated as the group immersed itself in devising ways to 'educate' their peers and lost focus on what I felt was some very promising research and represented a move away from their original question of 'How can children influence the eco agenda in school?' Whilst there was nothing wrong with a change of direction they seemed to become fixated on a teaching approach rather than a research method. In some ways the children's apparent change of focus, from research to learning, may be understandable in that children no doubt see school as a place for learning, rather than for research. There they witness teachers, teaching, rather than conducting research, so maybe the boundary between research and education became clouded. This illustrates a tension between how children wished to develop their research and how I would have liked to see it develop, and thus a tension between mine and their views of what research is. Maybe children had become 'lost' in my taught process of research and were trying to find their own. It could be claimed that this represents a potential issue with children as researchers being left totally to their own devices.

The following conversation demonstrates my attempt to try and get the girls to maintain some kind of research focus, as I saw it, during their games.

Me – What are you going to be looking for during your game?

(A pause and some confused looks)

Me – Well, you have a good idea for a game, but what are you finding out as researchers from it?

Eve – Oh... Well, we could observe to see if the children learn anything.

Me - What would you need to know first?

Eve - What they already know ... and afterwards ask them again and see if they have learned anything.

Me - What will that tell you?

Eve - If they've improved.

Cheryl - We'll see what strategies worked, so school could use them again.

Me - What strategies are you checking then?

Cheryl - If it's memorable, like something they'll remember.

Eve - See if doing something fun and exciting helps them to learn.

Cheryl - We think it's learning by doing, but in a fun way.' (Field notes.

23.05.12)

In this case, my questioning was an effort to refocus the girls on the research process, as I regarded it, and an attempt to try to get them to define the research value of their proposed activity. Whilst their responses demonstrated some potential for investigating learning approaches, I do not believe it was thought out enough to achieve the aims, neither was it focused on their original eco-agenda question. Had they arrived at the idea a little earlier in the process maybe they could have explored it further and adapted it to their purpose. Furthermore, I still had the feeling that although the responses demonstrated an ability to think quickly and link their game to a potential outcome, they still saw the activity as an informative game.

The two examples above contained children who were in the 'higher achieving' set for Maths in Year 6 and as such were more competent with the mathematical techniques they used. The approaches can be contrasted with Louise and Rebecca, both from the 'lower achieving' set, who encountered difficulty with what I envisaged as the simple task of tallying.

The girls had around 200 responses to their questions regarding BLP and at an initial meeting it soon became clear that they were unsure as to what to do with them all.

When asked what they could do their first reaction was to state that some were 'not interesting' as they merely listed skills and suggested they could be removed altogether. I explained that they needed to see if they could find any patterns or themes and suggested they investigate the frequency with which skills were mentioned and that to do this, they could still include those that weren't interesting. In an attempt to develop some illustration of this, I asked whether they had noticed anything when looking through the responses from Year 6 and the following discussion ensued:

L – Only one person in Year 6 mentioned that they use distilling.

Me – That might be the beginning of data analysis, L.

L – What's that?

Me – You look at your results and see if you can make sense of it, you might find patterns or odd things, things that are the same or different or you might find out how often different skills are mentioned ...

R – Well we noticed that more people seem to use it at school than at home.

Me – Why do you think that might be?

R – Well we think they do use it at home, but they just don't know, they don't really think about it. (Field notes, 20.06.12)

At a subsequent meeting where they still hadn't moved the tallying process on I asked them if they would like me to go through the process with them to help them generate some frequencies. They seemed happy with this proposal.

This illustrated a fairly common theme throughout that children enjoyed working with other children in school asking and finding things out, but were much less comfortable when faced with the far more difficult task of analysing that information. Maybe in this case the analysis was not as straightforward as I had first imagined, as some responses made reference to more than one skill, whilst others included comments on a context for its use. In this instance, I applied my own perspective of comfort with data handling, perceiving a straightforward piece of data sorting, and assumed the girls would find it easy. I didn't really empathize with the girls, yet my experiences of other adults in school examining data would

suggest it can prove problematic, so I am not sure why I assumed children would find it easy. On reflection, it would probably have been more helpful for the girls had I made this intervention at an earlier stage. I feel that with these two girls my supervisory role and intervention was more prominent than in the two previous cases, as they required a little more directing. An issue for me was that in trying to let them resolve things on their own with minimal intervention, they were left struggling for too long. A key skill for a supervisor in this position is to develop the ability of knowing when to intervene and by how much.

Eventually they generated the following results (26.06.12):

Class 15 (24 responses, 14 girls, 10 boys)

Boys	Girls
Collaboration = IIII (4)	Collaboration = IIIIIIIIIII (17)
Imagining = IIII (4)	Perseverance = IIIIIIII (11)
Perseverance = IIIIII (6)	Imagining = IIII (4)
Making Links = I (1)	Making Links = II (2)
Managing Distractions = I (1)	Independence = I (1)
Empathy = I (1)	Managing Distractions = III (3)
Planning = I (1)	Noticing = I (1)

Class 14 (23 responses 12 girls, 11 boys)

Boys	Girls
Collaboration = IIIII (5)	Collaboration = IIIIIIIII (11)
Distilling = I (1)	Planning = III (3)
Perseverance = III (3)	Making Links = IIII (4)
Noticing = II (3)	Perseverance = IIIIII (7)
Empathy = II (2)	Questioning = II (2)
Questioning = III (3)	Noticing = II (2)
Reasoning = I (1)	Imagining = III (3)
Managing distractions = III (3)	Empathy = IIIII (5)
	Absorption – I (1)

They provided a written commentary and mentioned the following:

- Girls seem to mention more BLP skills on their slips than boys
- Collaboration seems to be a skill that girls choose a lot more than boys in both classes
- No boys mentioned independence but seven girls did.

Class 14 mentioned different skills to Class 15
Again, in discussion they were better able to express their views, although the effect of my questioning obviously had an effect as they expanded on these initial findings.
These two examples illustrate the children's thinking:

R – It's funny that collaboration was the most popular skill with girls in both classes

Me – Why do you think that?

R – Well girls seem to be better at working together and thinking about what they are doing ...

L – Not so many boys seem to think about collaboration.

Me – Are you surprised by that? ('How do you feel about that?' may have been more appropriate, being a more open question.)

L – Not really, because girls seem to like working more in groups

Me – Don't boys like to collaborate?

L – Well some do, but they seem to like to get on and do their own thing.

Me – Why do you think the two classes mentioned different skills?

R – Perhaps they use them different ...

L – It might be because they get taught them different.

Me – What do you mean ...?

L – Well, Mr F. might get people to use different skills to Miss C

Me – What do you think about that?

R – We should all get the same really ... it might not be fair if some people do different things to others

Me – So, what would you tell the teachers?

R – That ... just teach us all the same

L – Yeah, then nobody gets missed out. (Field notes, 26.06.12)

The girls mentioned this to governors pointing out that they felt the school should make sure that all teachers taught the same skills to children. For me, this generates an implication for school to consider, as inconsistencies in delivery and emphasis mean that not all children are given the same opportunities to develop an awareness of their own learning skills. The apparent preference amongst children

for collaborative learning, potentially highlights what Alcoff (1991, p.15) describes as 'discursive context', particularly as work from other groups indicates that children see collaboration as a key feature for successful and enjoyable learning. The notion of learning together is a key part of the school's philosophy of learning, which is firmly within the area of 'situated learning' (Lave & Wenger (1991)). So, it could be asked, whether or not the contextual influence on the respondents encourages a certain response to predominate. Indeed, both Alcoff (1991) and Arnot & Reay (2007) identify the conditions in which dialogue is developed as being of primary importance. Arnot & Reay argue that researchers should concentrate on how voice is generated within classrooms, especially as this provides both the context for interaction and the mode of communication. They further suggest that each of these elements is further influenced by the interactional conditions established within each classroom. Potentially, this could indicate that different responses would be expected from different classrooms, dependent upon the influences of varied cultures within, as established by the dominant power, the teacher. Maybe this accounts for the differing responses from the two Year 6 classes. As headteacher it is important to identify where school and classroom ethos maybe comes into conflict and attempt to find ways to overcome it.

The children's ability to express views better verbally rather than in a written form has potential implications for their carrying out of 'adult-type' research, particularly in regard to the presentation of findings. My expectation for a written research report as an outcome for children seems to be driven by these

adult-type research requirements. It raises the question as to whether data analysis has to be presented in writing at all. The issue possibly reflects a more general issue within education and schooling where children are frequently required to write, before they have sufficient time to speak, think and discuss, particularly within the national assessment agenda. This approach contrasts to that found in school, where children are well prepared for extended writing, with plenty of opportunities to speak, discuss and clarify ideas before being asked to write a final version. In this way there is a clear, developmental progression towards the final written outcome.

5.3 A suitable audience for presentation

I liked it when we saw the governors they listened to what we had to say ... it's great to know that what we did will change things in school ... it wasn't just a waste of time. (Katrina, Exit interview, 18.07.12)

Hill (2006) and Stafford et al (2003) support the need for children's involvement in research to be 'meaningful' and whilst interpretations of 'meaningful' could be multi-faceted and wide-ranging, the following section, in examining the outcomes of the work of the research group, also outlines my attempts to make research 'meaningful', by attaching credibility to it. To this end I aimed to meet key issues identified by Lundy & McEvoy (2012), that of a suitable audience for children, and Bucknall (2012), the need for outcomes and dissemination. Hill (2006) claims that much child participation fails to touch on adult-child power relations and whilst involvement in activities may be considered a step forward, participation should be seen to influence choices and decisions at a later date. Similarly, Oldfather (1999) found that adult questioning of findings, convinced children that they were being listened to. This added to a sense of growing worth, and that through presenting these findings, they were contributing to change. As part of this section I will consider the impact of the programme on children.

Throughout the process, as I have stated in this thesis, I believed it was important for the children's work to be taken seriously and for them to feel that what they were doing was useful, so although I pointed out that their work could have an impact upon school, I made no definite promises that it would. I feel this reflected the view of Stafford et al (2003) who suggested that whilst children felt something should happen as a result of their opinions being sought, they realise that this may not always be possible. Despite this disclaimer, the children seemed to accept the challenge and Chelsey's journal entry reflected this:

Tuesday 21st February 2012

I'm going to sort out my documents now and speak to Mr Jones about putting my method into action along with asking him about how **I may make my mark on Hilltop when I leave for high school.**

Her mission to make Hilltop a better school was not quite as grand as that of the eco group, who presented a questionnaire to participants with the following comment:

We are doing this questionnaire before we start a major project.

Our project is called Trash-Olympics .

PLEASE BE TRUTHFUL AS WE ARE TRYING TO FIND OUT HOW TO HELP OUR SCHOOL AND THE PLANET.

WE ARE PART OF MR.JONES' RESEARCH GROUP AND *OUR TOPIC IS, AS YOU'VE PROBLEY ALREADY GUESSED, SAVING THE PLANET!* (23.05.12)

With regard to making the children's work 'meaningful', and ensuring their research was taken seriously, given the levels of enthusiasm and what I believed to be the quality of some findings, I felt it was important that the children were able to present them to an appropriate forum. To this end I felt that a meeting with school governors, the policy makers, was an appropriate way to bring their work to a conclusion. For me this was about trying to ensure their findings had the greatest chance possible to influence school policy and practice, something a presentation to parents, for example, wouldn't have allowed for. (Unfortunately, time issues didn't allow for both events to take place.) I asked the group if they would like to present their findings in this way and there was a general consensus amongst the group that this would be a good idea. Therefore, I arranged for five of the school's governors to visit school to discuss the children's research. With hindsight, given the involvement in the research work of

considerable numbers of other children in school, it would also have been a good idea for the researchers to present their findings to the whole school. This would have enabled all the children involved to see that a number of the studies to which they had contributed, had made an impact on the school as a whole. Despite this, comments from exit questionnaires illustrate the importance of the meetings with governors and support the findings of Hill et al (2004), as several children mentioned this event as being one of the parts they most enjoyed.

- *One of the best parts was when the governors came in and we showed them our work and told them what we had found out they really listened and were interested in what we had to say. (Rachel, exit interview, 19.07.12)*
- *The governors bit was good ... they liked our ideas and said it would be good to try some of them out. (Helen, exit interview, 18.07.12)*

Although arranging the meeting involved some difficulties, for example, getting working governors into school during the day, my influence as the headteacher helped this to happen. One wonders whether a class teacher or external researcher would have managed to get a similar response.

I discussed a possible format for the meeting with the children and they made it clear that they didn't want to stand in front of the governors and 'talk at them', exhibiting their work by means of a formal presentation. They indicated that they would like a less formal set up with individual or paired governors discussing things with different groups. They said that this would allow more than one group to be involved at one time, whilst I felt it would allow governors to question the children informally and permit the children to demonstrate more than just their findings by giving them the opportunity to discuss the process and its impact in greater detail. I also believed that not all the final reports the children had produced really summed up children's development and findings and felt that they would do themselves greater justice within this informal approach. I arranged for the meeting to take place in the school's ICT suite allowing children access to their electronic work and notes. The governors moved between the groups listening and discussing the children's work and findings. I took on the role of

observer as I felt that the children had a clear idea and command of their work and didn't need me to act as a mediator. In this respect, this was an opportunistic, rather than a planned research role.

My belief that the children were far more comfortable in conversation than in producing written work was borne out through the observations of the dialogue between them and governors. For example, Helen and June were able to discuss in considerable detail after-school clubs and the preferences expressed by children, as well as the process they had gone through to reach their conclusions. From their analysis of the data they had acquired, they had been able to identify a range of children's preferred clubs and passed these to governors (and eventually to the Extended Schools Coordinator).

During the course of their work a decision had been taken by the private provider of the school's out of hours care to close the provision and the girls had decided to research the impact of this, so they also presented findings and suggestions regarding this provision.³

In their written report they stated,

We found out that people think that it is not a good idea to shut down Acorns because of problems that are going to pop up, such as what will happen to children who's parents are at work.

Other people think that it is a good idea because if Acorns is going to be changed over there will be a wider range of different activity's.

People wanted to have dance drama and different girls dancing clubs to be instead of Acorns. Some want to do more cooking classes and food tasting but boys want to have more sporty clubs instead of Acorns. (12.07.12)

In discussion, they commented on the feelings towards the current club, which was quite a delicate matter, but they demonstrated sensitivity and an awareness of this.

They explained that many children felt that there were too few organised activities and they were just left to sort themselves out and as a consequence, 'it was boring.' They suggested that this was the prime reason for the dwindling numbers and consequent closure. They went on to propose that for a successful club there should be 'better'

³ In response to this decision the Governing Body had decided to take on the provision of out-of-hours care and was still in the process of finalising details for this.

contact between adults and children. When pressed on this issue, and despite some reluctance to be critical, the girls explained that many club members felt that a number of adults at the club, had little or no interest in them and just wanted 'to sit around drinking tea and talking, rather than doing anything with the kids' (13.07.12). They also went on to describe situations that I would see as a lack of supervision. They felt 'better' contact would address these issues, particularly via the use of more planned activities, including ones where children and adults could do things together. They also proposed that there should actually be a breakfast available for children in the morning. As some governors were involved in the setting up of their after-school club they found these comments not only interesting, but extremely useful. They encouraged the children to speak to the newly appointed Provision Manager to discuss their findings. As a result of their work the school set up two nights of gymnastics clubs, whilst football clubs were extended into different year groups to cater for younger children and a new gardening club was established. Their suggestions for the out-of-hours care were incorporated into practice from September 2012 and currently the club is thriving, with up to forty children enjoying breakfast in school each morning. The work of this pair, in particular, seems to represent an example of 'consultation', following on from the children's 'participation' in research.

As a pairing I believe Helen and June had really got to grips with the issues they set out to investigate and were knowledgeable about the processes they had gone through to reach conclusions. In their discussion with governors, they answered questions comfortably regarding both process and outcomes and demonstrated a level of confidence that comes from knowing something thoroughly because one has truly become immersed in it. They were able to explain in detail how they had conducted their research, how they had analysed their data and how, from that, they had reached conclusions. They were able to refer to their actions throughout

their work and explained how they were able to change course to get the kind of responses they required to address their research focus. They even mentioned the elements they had identified that they would have liked to have investigated further. Helen's response in an exit questionnaire, demonstrates that they felt they would have an impact on school:

It will help school to make changes to the clubs they run and making them more in line with what the people want. (Exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)

Their findings, particularly in regard to the previous out-of-hours provision were perceptive and reflected my own assumptions that there were issues in the way the club was run which was affecting uptake. This particular element seems to illustrate the suggestion of Alderson (2009) that children in certain ways may be better suited to research than adults, being better placed to be successful in getting responses from peers that adults may not have because of power and generational issues. For although I had made assumptions regarding the provision from my own observations, no child had made any detrimental comment to me, whereas they were prepared to be open and frank in providing opinions to their peers.

I believe the meeting with governors demonstrated the difference between the children's written and spoken reporting. Although their written work contained suggestions and an outline of what they had done, in discussion, they were able to demonstrate a much more knowledgeable perspective and a far greater understanding of the process they had gone through as researchers. Maybe this belief is linked to my feeling that children needed to present some sort of conventional report rather than simply demonstrating that they could collect and

analyse data and make reasonable conclusions based upon that data. In part I feel this is based upon an assumption that children should engage in all the stages of research, as though they were adult researchers. The 'need' for a conventional outcome was certainly my issue as the children were very happy to meet governors, discuss their work and make suggestions for future actions to help the school. In many ways this is reflective of education more widely, where the standard approach to assessment is based firmly upon children's ability to write and commit thoughts to this form. If the emphasis was to change here and placed upon what children say we may find that their abilities would indeed be assessed more highly. In some ways this possibly linked to the way that I trained children to be researchers; I am aware that the approach and process I introduced them to was very much an adult-type one. As it became evident that children were doing things slightly differently perhaps I could have involved them in the design of the on-going process and the training to accompany it, which could have had implications for future projects. However, their inexperience as researchers would raise questions as to whether they would have been able to contribute to this design. Certainly some of their exit comments on the approach would support this view, as there were no real comments or suggestions that would have led to the process being changed. One thing I could have done would have been to have pressed them a little further on the issue within the exit surveys.

In summary, the following suggestions were made by the remaining groups. The Eco group ended up with a two-pronged focus and suggested that the school needed to do a lot more work on the eco agenda in lessons to raise awareness of a wider variety of issues, suggesting that 'certain things such as re-cycling were mentioned over and

over again, but other things hardly got a mention' (06.07.12). Their 'Trash-Olympics' activity was enjoyed by participants who also seemed to learn the facts they were presented with during the activity. As a result, they suggested this active approach to learning would be a good way to get children to learn about eco issues in the future, providing a potential for impact on pedagogy in school. Again they felt they had a positive contribution to make to school, as evidenced by the following comments:

- *It will give the school a different way to encourage Eco. (Eve, exit interview, 19.07.12)*
- *It will help the school to recycle more and give kids different ways to learn. (Cheryl, exit interview, 19.07.12)*

The BLP group indicated that children in school demonstrated a clear awareness of the different BLP skills and their findings suggested pupils felt it had a positive impact on their attitudes and approaches to learning, as they recognised how knowledge of the skills helped them learn. From their work across different classes, where they recognised different emphases and use of language, they stated that they felt that greater consistency was required in the use of the language of learning within school, to ensure pupils had the same experiences. They also identified a potential gender difference in preferences for the usage of different leaning skills, although they did not really pursue this. Again, they felt that their work could impact on the whole school stating, 'I think our findings will get people to use BLP more and in better ways ... people won't have to keep on re-learning things if everyone teaches it the same.' (04.07.12)

A further suggestion by Alderson (2009) relating to children's suitability to research over adults is that they see things with a more open and less restricted view. She further proposes they are more ready to accept new findings and ask some radical questions, as they feel their own personal situations and roles are under less threat than adults. In some respects, I believe that these two groups

were able to demonstrate elements of these suggestions. The eco group expressed a frustration at the school's apparent concentration on re-cycling rather than other issues, whilst the BLP group were dissatisfied with what they felt were inconsistencies in the delivery and approach in school. I am not sure whether teachers reflecting upon these practices would have brought the same insights, not being on the receiving end and also having a vested interest in the delivery. With the additional recommendation from the eco group for a more active approach to learning, I feel both groups presented ideas that had potential implications for teaching in school and as a result their ideas have been built into discussions within the school improvement planning programme amongst the Senior Leadership Team.

Although the two girls who had investigated other people's opinions of school had not spoken for several weeks, they did present their work together. From their questionnaires to local residents they had identified two particular issues that were impairing the school's image in the local area. They recommended two campaigns to help repair these impressions. Firstly, a programme to highlight the issue of litter being dropped on the way to and from school, and secondly, one to try and get parents and carers to think about safe and respectful parking when dropping off or collecting children. Although Katrina was a little unsure of the impact of their work, her comments indicate that she hoped for some lasting impact.

I don't really know, but I hope my research and the suggestions will help raise awareness of the issues and get something done – people will think about dropping rubbish. (Exit interview, 18.07.12)

One governor seemed particularly enthralled with the girls' views and I recorded him stating, 'I am really impressed with what the children have done here ... I agree with the findings from local residents ... we now need to see what we can do about it'

(06.07.12). As a result of their findings the deputy head raised the issue of litter with children in a number of assemblies and the school have also been in touch with a local Councillor to try and get additional litter bins placed around the immediate school area. The same Councillor has been involved in discussions regarding parking issues and is part of a working group investigating ways the issue may be resolved.

I presented the work of three other groups who were not at the meeting including that of Leanne, who had moved to another school, but had investigated author preferences amongst Key Stage 2 children. From a series of questionnaires and interviews she had identified a number of authors children enjoyed reading but were under-represented in the school library. She was then involved in the selection and purchase of new books. I also revealed that she had undertaken her own fund-raising activity, selling cakes to children, to raise money to purchase additional books for school. In this case, Leanne's research had a spin-off as it moved into a development project. Brad's partner, Mitchell, had also left school and I helped him discuss his work with governors. Whilst this was incomplete he had identified that children felt that the best learning experiences involved 'doing something you love' and although he had not been able to identify exactly what this meant to children, it seemed to be linked to the notion of collaborative learning and working with friends.

After the meeting, governors explained their feelings at the children's ability to discuss their findings and explain how they had found things out, making the following comments:

- *They were so enthusiastic and knowledgeable... they could answer all the questions I asked and had some really good ideas for improving things around school ... I particularly liked the suggestions for the Out-of-hours club as I have been working with (new manager) to see how we can make it viable.*
- *I can't believe they were so well-informed, they have found out so much and have come up with really clear and sensible suggestions ... I am*

really proud to be associated with this and hope that my daughter will get the chance to do this when she is a little older.

- *They have told me things about research that I didn't know.*
(Governor comments, 06.07.12)

From my own personal position it was important that the children were in a situation where they were able to influence the school's agenda and impact upon decisions being taken. As headteacher, supervisor and researcher, I recognised the importance of dissemination for the children's research, their sense of achievement, for school improvement and as an outcome of my research. Again this situation illustrates the power role of headteacher as researcher and my ability to control the school improvement agenda. Coupled with a determination that the children's work should not go unrecognised, I was able to ensure that their ideas reached an appropriate forum and were given a chance to be implemented in policy. Therefore in terms of this dissemination, my role was probably vital. This may not always be possible for a researcher in a different position. Although the final decision making rested with adults, partly due to the existing process within the school system. I do not believe that decisions taken as a result of the children's work merely took account of their perspectives, as in some cases, implementation of their suggestions was made in full. One frustration for me was that, although the researchers made a number of suggestions for improvement, in the vast majority of instances they had left school before they were able to see any impact.

5.4 Difficulties to overcome

In the experience of the Eco group outlined above, I experienced a sense of frustration that work was not necessarily heading in a direction that I felt it should. This sense of

frustration was experienced elsewhere, particularly where I sensed potentially good work going to waste. There were a variety of reasons for this, some of which were unavoidable, such as, as I have stated, children leaving to move to other schools. Other reasons were generally linked to the maintenance of focus on their research purpose and questions; although the issue of relationships was also prominent (see p.125).

For Brad and Mitchell their work suffered from a combination of the first two reasons given above. Initially, they wanted to look into how children thought lessons in school could be improved. However, this seemed to move on to a far more wide-ranging notion of how school in general, could be improved. One of their initial question sets included the following, illustrating this wide scope:

- What 3 things that you like about school?
- What would you change to make your best subject better?
- What do you think makes a good Teacher?

Homework-

Do you think it's useful?

Do you always complete it?

Do you ever have help with it, if so, who helps you?

Despite this apparent lack of direction, some of their work, which had at this point moved to a focus on playground activity, proved quite insightful. Both boys were also very confident when dealing with other children and certainly seemed to enjoy this aspect of the work. Following some of their observational work regarding the playground, Brad made the following comments:

We noticed that the quiet area is used a lot, but it isn't really very big, so it gets a bit packed... we think it would be a good idea to make another area at the other end of the playground, so more people can get some quiet ... Sometimes when everyone is playing we noticed that some people are left out. (12.03.12)

Mitchell then added

We thought we could try and find out how some of them feel or whether they would like to be with friends or stuff like that. (12.03.12)

We then discussed a possible way forward and they decided they would like to observe a little more and generate some possible questions to ask children about relationships

in the playground, agreeing to return in a few days to show me what they had come up with. They returned several days later with a series of, predominantly closed, questions about the playground, but with nothing that was focused on the agreed direction of relationships. The questions included:

Do you like our playground?

Do you think that our playground should be bigger?

Do you think we need more equipment? (16.03.12)

For me the work of the two boys generated mixed emotions. As a researcher and supervisor I had a sense of frustration that despite what I believed were my best efforts, I was unable to give them a real sense of direction. I felt that some of the comments above demonstrated some careful observational work and were actually quite insightful. They had identified a potential issue that certainly merited further investigation; however, as happened at other times with their work, they turned their attention to a different focus. Certainly as headteacher I would have been interested in the boys finding out more about relationships and children's perceptions of the playground. Maybe this is another example of where my wishes as headteacher and observations as researcher came into conflict. In this case I could perhaps have been a little more demonstrative as a supervisor and directed the boys more determinedly. I feel my light touch approach was probably borne from an awareness of potential power issues, resulting in my not wanting to impose my wishes upon them. Their work was further complicated when Mitchell left school at the end of May 2012 leaving Brad to continue with the work alone. My insider knowledge of the two boys would have led me to suggest that whilst Brad was extremely enthusiastic about the work, it was Mitchell who would provide a little more direction, indeed, following Mitchell's departure, despite his best efforts, Brad did seem to lose track.

The boys were not the only ones who were distracted, as other groups found themselves changing their attentions between different focus areas, or as was the case with some, they became preoccupied with what I would term 'non-research' elements. With regard to this latter point, there seemed to be a wealth of 'non-research' work going on at various points, as children tended to follow their peers along routes that they found interesting, although the purpose was questionable. For example, when Rebecca and Louise decided to use a word search as a way into generating discussion around learning in school, at least three other groups devised similar word searches based around their area of research. Whilst I felt the original idea was very good as it was used to initiate discussion and ask further research questions, others saw it and followed suit. However, in these cases, the creation of a word search became their main objective and didn't really have a role to play in enhancing their work. Similarly, as the Eco group increasingly turned their attention to their 'Trash Olympics', others began to look for different approaches that revolved around games. Mia and Chantal had an idea that they would like to hold a drawing competition as part of their exploration of learning and classrooms, beginning with an idea that they wanted children to draw what they liked in their classrooms. Whilst this idea seemed to me to be a very good way to generate data, they quickly turned their attention to making posters to advertise their intention. This could have represented an important step along the way; however, the poster designs became increasingly elaborate, including the promise of prizes. Again, I felt that they lost direction and concentrated on the wrong things.

The example of Chelsey, although a little more extreme than others, illustrates a child who flitted from one thing to another. A journal entry part way through the process outlined not only the frustration she was feeling, but also illustrated some of her problems in maintaining attention on one area, or in her case a desire to create different methods.

3rd February 2012

I've been to Mr Jones and had a chat about where I should go from here. I told him that all the ideas I've had, have been unsuccessful as I've been unable to collect enough information to answer my question...I've also started a PowerPoint on research group as I thought it could come in helpful.

The following extracts from her report exemplify the constant changes in her research

THE TIGHTROPES METHOD

The tightropes method, I created when Mr. Jones held the meeting about 'More Realistic Research'. ... This was when my own research project- Can learning at Oakham Primary School be made better? was created.

TESTING THE TIGHTROPES METHOD

I tested the Tightropes method on a few children and I encountered a problem. The Yr. 3 children I tried out my method with found it confusing.

CLASS QUESTIONNAIRE

I came up with this method It's simple really. I ask a class some questions then mark how many people put their hands up. I focused this on "Is BLP actually used in the classrooms?"

CLASS QUESTIONNAIRE? PROBLEM!

As I carried out my method (two classes) I felt there was something wrong. The number of hands didn't add up logically and, as I later realized while studying the papers, the method wasn't working the way I had presumed.

THIS METHOD THEN WAS FLUNG OUT OF THE WINDOW. {This I now regret}

MY FORUM GROUP

Well, it was partly Mr. Jones' brainwave, but I changed it a bit to suit the way I required.

I gave them an interview on Thursday 8th December 2011 and noted in my diary that I was slightly stuck.

...I studied the results of my forum group attempt. I tried to think of a way to carry on with the method but I couldn't think of a way to improve it except try it with some other older children. At the time I didn't like the idea of this, so I put it behind me as another way to research that hadn't gone as well as I wanted. I now regret this decision but am looking to see if it would work if I carry out the method with a class of year 6 children and see if it works any better and if I have/had created a whole new method of research.

COLOUR OR NO COLOUR?

After yet another chat with Mr. Jones, I came up with yet another way to research...hopefully.

I was chatting about how I thought coloured boards around the classroom help children to learn, when I thought about a skill that never seems to actually come in useful.....

Comparing. I thought about a way of using this to research and came up with "Colour or no Colour?"

THE RESULTS

Well actually there were no results as the children's classmates went outside and the two children I chose insisted on going outside. I didn't bother going any further on this (06.07.12)

This one example seems to encapsulate a number of the difficulties children had in maintaining a clear focus on their research work, illustrating what is potentially one of the hardest expectations when children are invited to become researchers. The extract from her report highlights the constant change in her approach and her apparent desire to create a 'new' method. Whilst this desire may be admirable in itself, it did seem to take over and become a preoccupation and almost certainly

detracted from her overall research work. I also felt that some of her ideas could have enabled her to collect useful data, had she stuck with them and been prepared to refine them a little along the way. Certainly, her own reflections indicate a degree of regret that she didn't show greater perseverance and attempt to work through difficulties, indicating a potentially important learning point for her. As a supervisor whilst I offered praise for some of her ideas and encouragement to try things again to identify ways to improve her ideas, she invariably came back with a different idea at subsequent meetings. Had her multi-method approach been focused on a consistent question and applied in depth, then it would have had great potential. However, the change of research focus that seemed to accompany each method change served only to further undermine her progress. The idea of a PowerPoint on conducting research not only proved a distraction for Chelsey, but for others as well, as having observed her a number of children turned their attention to producing their own.

In outlining the constant change within this example, I acknowledge that change during the research process is not necessarily a bad thing, indeed my own work has gone through change. In the case of some children, for instance, change seemed to provide a distraction from the research process, as I conceived it, as they concentrated on different avenues of work. This impeded what could be perceived as the harder task of progressing things. Although this provided useful data for me as researcher, in looking back on the process, I feel that as a supervisor, I needed to provide greater direction for some of the children and maybe a little more insistence that they maintained concentration on their task.

Greater supervisory assertion, could, with tighter timelines and deadlines, have helped to keep some of the children on track and thus enabled them to reach more fitting conclusions. In Chelsey's case, it would probably have left her feeling less frustrated at what she perceived as being 'unsuccessful'. As mentioned elsewhere, I believe this lack of assertion came from a desire not to be seen as the headteacher and take on a power role, though, with hindsight, I believe I possibly over-compensated for this at times. Notwithstanding this, as a researcher, I believe these examples indicate a potential drawback for children conducting research, although similar distraction may be relevant to anyone conducting research, not just children.

5.5 Group dynamics

Don't be in a group with your best mates. (Katrina, exit interview, 18.07.12)

A further field in which I felt conflict within my dual role revolved around the issue of group dynamics. This was ever-present within the research teams built around 'friendships,' which by their very nature are not constant. The children themselves indicated that this was an issue for them and there were a number of occasions when disagreements tested friendships and the resultant breakdowns led to children claiming they were unable to work together anymore and deciding they would move group. My response was to attempt to remove myself from the issues and encourage the children to reach their own solutions a little more than I probably would have done as a headteacher. Although as head I would only have become involved in more serious cases and so would not have dealt with what could probably be described as 'everyday squabbles'. These were not always resolved and in some cases eventually undermined some very promising work (Mia and Chantal). Although I don't feel I allowed relationships to suffer unduly, I merely continued to observe from a researcher's perspective, as illustrated in the example below. Furthermore, I brought to my role of

researcher, insider knowledge of the history of children, which meant I was aware that certain children had been involved in a number of 'relationship breakdowns' in the past, certainly more than would be usual. Whilst this may appear judgemental it represents an area that as an internal researcher, and headteacher, I had to deal with.

The following example typified the minor disagreements that impacted on the research groups. In the middle of their work on school clubs Clare came to see me to let me know she had fallen out with Helen and June and wanted to change groups to work with another group. As she left the two girls arrived and explained there had been an issue and they felt that Clare was trying to take over the direction of the group. Helen stated quite emphatically that, 'We'd rather not have to work together anyway.' I spoke with the girls and explained that if they felt they were unable to work together then they could go their separate ways.

I don't feel that in this instance I pressed the girls for reconciliation as much as I might in my headteacher role, where I would probably have taken more time to push for a solution that brought them back together. Although given that Clare had a long history of falling out with her peers, I feel that I saw this as just another incident in a long catalogue of fallouts.

On one occasion the fallout between Katrina and Chelsey, two girls who had been close friends throughout school, did seem a little more serious. Chelsey's journal entries indicate the extent of the issue and her feelings.

Entry 1

There are problems occurring with me and Katrina. We are arguing all of the time and can't get along. I've been working really hard on the word search, which is for OUR research project, but she keeps nagging me to help her with the report, which SHE SAID SHE WOULD DO BY HERSELF!!!!!!! I don't want to work with someone I can't even ask to pass me something without arguing with her!!!!

Entry 2

[illegible]

[illegible]

Although Chelsey's annoyance is clear my observations of their research work illustrated a changing dynamic in the power relationship between the two girls. Their work was further complicated by Chelsey's insistence and desire to complete her own individual project. Katrina commented to me on several occasions that she felt this had interfered with the progress of their joint work. Although they had a long-lasting and strong friendship, it was one in which Chelsey was definitely the dominant personality (prior relations in school indicated that, as did conversations with Katrina's Mum who had revealed a sense of Katrina playing 'second fiddle' in the association). To me this breakdown almost highlighted a challenge to the prevailing dynamic with Katrina asserting herself a little more. Additionally, Katrina seemed to have the ability to establish new friendships and move on whilst the same was not so easy for Chelsey, who struggled to cope with the change and make new friendships, hence her reaction in the journal. Although Katrina seemed to develop greater confidence during the research work, it is impossible to say whether her increased assertiveness was partly a result of this, although it may have been a factor.

Although these instances seemed to be based around personalities, there were implications of power relations at play and other examples seem to highlight this issue between children. When asked about any difficulties they encountered, Eve and Cheryl mentioned the group dynamics, stating that one of the most annoying aspects of the research process had been working within a larger group where they felt certain members had not really taken on their fair share of the workload.

Eve - Yes, we started off with quite a few in our group, then it went down, it seemed like the less people the more you got done.

Cheryl – It was difficult to work out what you accomplished with different people doing different bits or not doing them as it turned out.

Eve – Yes, it was much easier doing it on your own. (By this I assumed she meant in the pair, as the two girls worked very well together)

Me - What about working as a pair?

Cheryl – That's what we mean, XXX just ended up wandering around in the ICT suite and never seemed to get anything done

Me – What did you do about it?

Eve – ... we said to her either do your work for us or go back to class, you're just taking advantage. (Eve and Cheryl, exit interview, 18.07.12)

In this case they were able to arrive at solutions themselves, apparently by asserting their power or dominance over their fellow group members. Through their action and the comments, 'do your work for us', I believe that they felt in control of the process and of their group. Again, prior knowledge suggests that Eve and Cheryl were two confident and popular girls, who were likely to have been seen as leaders by their peers. In this instance, they were extremely comfortable working with each other and therefore able to draw upon that strength of relationship to further assert their dominance over the process. One would have to ask whether these issues are restricted to children, or could similar tensions exist within adult groups. In such cases, supposedly, as they are likely to be being paid, they do not have the luxury of simply changing groups or dropping out.

Mel expressed similar feelings to Eve and Cheryl, however, the power balance in her dealings seemed to lie elsewhere.

I found other people annoying like when I made and sent out the questionnaires all on my own but when I got replies everyone wanted to help and Chloe invited others to join us and they didn't do anything, so I told them, then they got upset

and we fell out....it seemed like the more people you have in your group the less organised you are ... one minute I had four people, then 2 left and then they wanted to restart. Every time I planned anything they'd come back and mess it up again. It was better doing it on my own, but they said things like 'you're not my friend', so I felt like I had to let them start again. (Mel, exit interview, 19.07.12)

Although she had taken the lead in proposing and directing the group's research and doing the bulk of the work, her need to maintain friendships meant she was less forceful in dealing with others than Eve and Cheryl. Maybe she would have responded differently had she had a close colleague like the two others or maybe she just demonstrated sophisticated conciliatory tactics to keep up her research and maintain good relations. Despite this, I feel that possibly I let her down a little through my desire to allow children to decide upon their level of involvement in the research work to avoid being seen as the authority figure. Tighter ground rules regarding participation to ensure a level of commitment from all those involved, may have avoided the unfortunate consequences sensed by Mel and averted the frustrations of those children who had to deal with peers who they felt were not contributing enough. It is also interesting that Mel saw this as her group, which I presume came about as she seemed to generate the bulk of ideas and was also a constant member throughout, in fact the ideas proved portable, remaining with her throughout a number of disputes and group breakdowns. One could ask why within groups there seemed to be a hierarchy that emerged? In some ways these examples illustrate the power dynamics present between the children and highlight some of the inequalities that existed.

5.6 What do children get from being researchers?

At the end of the project one has to ask what the children who participated in the programme learnt from their involvement and whether there were any other outcomes attached to their taking part. Bucknall (2012, p.16) found that children involved in CaR projects demonstrated 'growth in knowledge, skills and confidence,' citing increased skills in wider curricular areas, as well as speaking and listening and higher order thinking. Lansdown (2002) correspondingly stressed a number of similar potential benefits for children, whilst Oldfather (1999) found the students who participated with her as co-researchers believed the experience made differences to them in a number of ways. In a similar vein to Lansdown, they felt they developed their abilities as researchers and also had a sense that they were able to make a difference, both for themselves and for others. With a different focus, Oldfather's co-researchers also felt they had a better understanding of how they learned and how they were motivated at the end of their work. Similarly, Kellett (2006) identified the following seven emergent themes from an analysis of potential benefits of children engaging in research.

- Raised self-esteem and sense of worth:
- Increased confidence:
- Development of transferable study skills:
- Sharpening of critical thinking skills.
- More effective communication.
- Creativity and emergence of independent learning.
- Original and valued contribution to knowledge:

Whilst I cannot claim all these benefits as outcomes of this study, some of the children's comments on exit would indicate they believed they had learned different things regarding research and developed in other ways as well. It is possible that some of these potential benefits could be claimed as outcomes of the conventional school curriculum, although my experience would suggest that this would be very much dependent upon the context in which the curriculum was being studied and the manner in which it was being taught.

In an exit questionnaire I asked the following questions with regard to research and the skills of research in a bid to establish the children's perceptions of their involvement:

1. How do you think your understanding of research has changed during your work?
2. How do you think your research skills have changed?

In response to the first question a number of comments related to children's previous views and the beginning of a different level of understanding. The following were typical comments:

- A lot. When we started I thought research was just looking for things on a computer. (Eve, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)
- I've learnt that researching is a lot more than just searching in Google! (Chelsey, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)
- Because I now know that research isn't just looking on the PC. (Anonymous, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)

This type of comment was reflected in Kellett's (2006) paper where the following comment was made by a participant, 'I used to think that doing projects meant gathering stuff from books and the internet. Projects are more than cut things out and stick them in.' (12-year-old girl, p.14). One has to question whether this view of research stems from the way projects are often presented and discussed in schools. It is certainly my experience that phrases referring to research are usually linked to finding out pre-existing information from secondary sources, increasingly this means searching the internet, rather than the collection of one's own data as part of an investigation. So, maybe it is not really surprising that children have this view of research as it seems to be one promoted by schools. Trying to take a more positive viewpoint, one could say that this previous experience encouraged certain 'research-like activities' in classrooms and was brought by children to the research skills training they received from me. There is a sense in which my study enabled the children to explore the concept of research as well as conducting it. I still feel that more projects involving children carrying out their own research would surely help to change this skewed viewpoint.

Other responses suggested children felt they had a changed view of the actual research process itself. Louise identified a perceived low starting point and development without really explaining her feelings, when she stated her understanding had changed '100%, because at first I just didn't understand research' (Exit questionnaire, 12.07.12). Helen went a little further with her comment explaining how she believed her understanding had helped her become a little more searching.

I get further through tasks and get more into things because I look further into other questions that help me get a better knowledge. (Exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)

Similarly, the following comments seem to demonstrate a reflection on elements of the process and purpose of research when she said,

- *I liked doing questionnaires and interviews because you can find out more information about what you are researching. (Louise, exit interview, 19.07.12)*
- *If we had got our surveys out a bit quicker, we'd have got our results together quicker and that would have helped ...then we'd have had more time to think about our findings. (Katrina, exit interview, 18.07.12)*

When Cheryl made the following comment it appears to suggest that on reflection she realised that other themes may have emerged from their work or that that they could have pursued certain lines of enquiry further to establish other possible outcomes.

Looking back we could have done a little more, gone beyond what we found, get the questionnaires out and look at the results a little more and see if there were any things we could have done from them – we could have asked more questions. (Exit interview, 18.07.12)

With regard to the second question, children's perceived improvements were mainly linked to methods and approaches for acquiring their information. This is not surprising really as this is where much of their attention was focussed during the project. I feel the following comments again indicate that children were increasingly able to reflect upon the process of research and in some cases recognise possible improvements themselves.

- It has changed a lot because at the start i didn't really know much and now I know a lot more about what to do like doing a questionnaire properly or using photos to get people to tell you what they think. (Mel, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)
- I have learn't how to ask questions properly by thinking about the questions I ask people more to get more detailed answers ...you have to ask them the right ones so they explain a bit more about what they think . (Anonymous, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)
- I have learned lots of different ways to carry out research like observation skills, where I can sit back a bit and watch what people are doing ... it's hard to make your notes when you are trying watch people. (Eve, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)

When asking the question 'Have you changed over the project?' in the exit questionnaire, I didn't want to lead children along a particular route, so tried, again, to leave it as open as possible. The children's responses related to two main areas, that of growing confidence and an impact on their wider learning. Some statements simply referred to a perceived building of individual confidence without any qualification, whilst for Louise that increased confidence seems to have had an impact on her general attitude to schooling.

- 'Yes. I have built a lot of confidence over the last year' (Rebecca, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)
- "Yes, I have because I have ganned confidence.' (Anonymous, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)
- 'I have built more confidence and feel more positive about things in school.' (Louise, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)

The feelings of Rebecca and Louise were reinforced by their parents at a Year 6 leaver's evening (17.07.12), when they approached me independently, and commented on the changes they had seen in their children. Rebecca's mother explained how she felt she had seen her grow in confidence through taking part in the group, as it had enabled her to 'come out of herself' and be 'far more positive about herself.'. She also suggested that some of her success in the recent Year 6 SATs had been down to this newly developed confidence. Louise's mother also claimed to notice a difference in her daughter and stated, 'You know what she was like, she never really spoke to anyone,

but now she is happy to approach different people and ask them all sorts of things....Miss Walker (her teacher) was telling me how much more confident she is in the classroom, she's even started asking questions in there as well.... and I can't believe she even dares come and knock on your door to talk about things' (Parent comment, 17.07.12)⁴. Their class teacher was able to confirm this view and also added that she felt that their increased confidence had played a part in both girls exceeding their original targets in the Year 6 tests.

Whilst it cannot simply be put down to the research work the fact that these two girls were involved in approaching and questioning other children and speaking to staff to gain access to subjects meant they probably went outside of their comfort zones. Once they had overcome some of their perceived barriers maybe it became a little easier to do other things with confidence. These comments reflect those reported by Kellett (2006), where both children and parents reported similar changes in children's levels of confidence as a result of participating as researchers. Whilst I took the opportunity of an unplanned and informal comment from parents, with hindsight, I would have liked to explore this area a little further rather than leaving it to exit questions. Kellett consulted parents in detail, as part of her work and as a result gained a wholly different perspective on the process. Again, this is something I feel would have enhanced my work had I done it.

Whilst Oldfather (1999) found participation brought a perceived increase in the confidence of children, with a focus on learning and motivation, she found that her researchers also expressed greater insight into their own abilities and increased understanding of how they learnt. Indeed, some of her participants claimed they thought about things differently as a result of their work. Again, it would have been interesting to find out whether the children involved in this study felt this wider benefit.

⁴ Both parents seemed a little perplexed when I produced a piece of paper and asked if they minded me making a record of their comments, but I recognised that what they said was useful data and I wanted to make an accurate record of their comments.

Whilst I don't really have the data to clearly put forward the reasons for this perception of increased confidence growth, comparison with Oldfather would possibly suggest that increased awareness and involvement (sometimes through necessity, to acquire data children needed to interact) were factors. Furthermore, when children seemed to have these perceptions of growing confidence through participation, it would have been good to have been able to conduct some longer term study and establish whether any such gains were short term or extended into high schools, bringing longer term benefits.

Bucknall (2012, 2009) discovered that in addition to gaining self-esteem, children also cited increased knowledge and skills as outcomes, not just in terms of research, but in curriculum areas as well. Comments made by some of the children indicated that they also felt this wider impact, feeling that the research work enhanced their learning in other areas.

- Our skills have changed and helped us with our learning in class. (Eve, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)
- I have definitely become smarter. (Brad, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)
- *...it's a good experience. It gives you more ideas and helps you with work in class, like in English, before I did research I wasn't doing as well, but I've done a lot better since. (Mel, exit interview, 19.07.12)*
- *It gives you a chance to develop your potential. You get work done in a more fun way, you can use the ICT suite to help with your work when you want and you work at your own speed. (Cheryl, exit interview, 19.07.12). (This may also be a reference to some of the increased freedoms they had as a group.)*
- *One thing it helped me with was my ICT skills, I even showed my Mum how to set up and change powerpoints. (Clare, exit interview, 19.07.12)*

Bucknall (2009) also found that one outcome mentioned frequently by children engaging in the research process was that of enjoyment. I asked the following questions in an exit questionnaire and the responses reflected her findings:

1. Have you enjoyed the project? (If so, what have been the best parts?)
2. What would you say to someone else who wanted to join the research group?

With regard to the first question, some responses were positive with no explanation, such as:

- It was a really good experience. (Anonymous, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)
- I really enjoyed it. (Brad, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)
- It was great. (Mel, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)

Other children provided more detailed responses, outlining some of the reasons for their feelings.

- I loved it! It was really interesting to see different thoughts/answers and try to make sense of it. I enjoyed trying to think how we could get different answers which had a better meaning which would help us more. (Eve, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)
- *It was the best, you asked us to do things on our own and I thought we had some open space to make up our own things and find out about what we wanted. (Brad, exit interview, 19.07.12)*
- Yes it was class. We have collaborated really well and the best part was when we made questionnaires. (Louise, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)

For the second question the children were very positive and felt they would recommend it to others. The following comments certainly seem to indicate that the children not only enjoyed the research work, but also felt that they had learned something from taking part. This second aspect is important for me, as like school in general, enjoyment is important as it can direct, create and sustain learning, however there does have to be some learning taking place.

- *You should join – it's a different experience and it gives you an opportunity to show that you can do something really different that's out of your comfort zone, by talking to other people about different things. It's different but still loads of fun. (Clare, exit interview, 19.07.12)*
- It is really fun, you will have a fun time and learn loads of new things. (June, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)
- That it is fun, you learn new stuff and we would like to do it again. (Louise, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)
- *I would say to someone else, join because it's a good experience. It gives you more ideas and helps you with work in class. (Mel, exit interview, 19.07.12)*

5.7 Insider researcher as supporting adult

Before we just kind of saw you doing assemblies and stuff and now you help us it seems very different. (Helen, exit interview, 18.07.12)

We see you different. In research you come across as less strict and you seem more fun and less serious in research. (Mel, exit interview, 19.07.12)

When Hill (2010) suggested a researcher should seek to minimise the authority image they convey I'm not sure he envisaged a situation where the researcher was the headteacher undertaking research within his own school and therefore held a position of authority within school. Although my role was multi-faceted within my study, the two prominent roles of researcher and headteacher sometimes came into conflict. Towards the end of the study I asked children to complete an exit questionnaire which asked about a number of features of the process and also carried out exit interviews with certain members of the research group. Some of the comments they made encouraged me to reflect a little further on my role in the process and in particular, the way they viewed me during their work.

The authority issue was probably at its most prominent during the build up to KS2 SATs, when I was faced with conflicting interests between the need to get Year 6 researchers to complete their projects before they left in the summer and to ensure they were fully prepared to be successful in the end of year tests (with all the implications of the external accountability agenda). My response was to virtually bring the research group to a close for four weeks, with no group sessions being held and only the occasional individual meeting. My thinking was that children needed to fully concentrate on test preparation so as to do as well as possible, although the degree to whether that was for themselves or the school is difficult for me to state. With hindsight, I believe I under-estimated the ability of children to cope with both jobs, indeed, as one member said, 'We could have easily carried on during SATs and all the preparation as we were doing most of our research at dinner.' This action represented my power over

the process, in this case to bring it to a halt, and my power to override the children's wishes, although at the time, I didn't consult them or discuss the issue, but merely took the unilateral decision. It also reflects the context of my power being within the overarching influence of the central accountability agenda and the need for me to ensure the school is as successful as possible within it. I believe in this instance my decisions reflected Foucault's (1982) view of power, in that my action acted upon the children's possible actions and thus I asserted my power over them within the terms of the relationship. I feel this decision certainly had an impact on the eventual outcomes and was probably a mistake, as the delay slowed the process and meant I was left trying to pick up the pace in the face of all the end of term events. It also meant I ended up putting children under more pressure to complete their work and, as a result, had an impact on the final product, their reports.

It could be argued that by allowing the children to carry out the research themselves my authority role was reduced as I became removed from that part of data collection, when responses were elicited from other pupils in school. However, my focus on the children as researchers meant that the authority impact I had upon the actual research group did indeed need to be minimized. This was a key focus of my role as I sought to diminish the impact in my personal dealings with the children. This meant I had to make adaptations, almost establishing discrete persona at different times, which proved difficult. In some ways, this reflects the issues highlighted by Perryman (2011) and Mercer (2007) with regard to managing roles when taking on insider research. Some of the group would have to be dealt with in situations other than as researchers. This was evident in dealings with Brad, when he was involved in 'incidents' around school, and sent to me as a sanction. In dealing with him, I was conscious of his role as a researcher and given some previous issues with engagement in school, I didn't want to discourage him from this work. Although tempting, as I knew he enjoyed his research, I felt it was important not use it as a lever, or threaten removal from the group. He made the following comment regarding this at the end of the process, 'I

know I had to see you for (the incident) and you shouted at me but the next time I came to see you about my work you were OK' (19.07.12). He went on to comment more generally about the process

I didn't really think you were a headteacher, but you were more like a normal teacher ... in the past I've mainly had to see you to talk about bad things that I've done bad but then I was talking about good things that I had done...It's good to come and see you about something I've done good. (Brad, exit interview, 19.07.12)

I believe these comments indicate that Brad, whose previous visits indeed had not always been for positive reasons, was able to distinguish between my roles, and almost form a different relationship with me, depending on the role I was in at the time. Noticeably, other comments indicated children were able to distinguish between my roles: in effect, they seem to almost describe two different personas. They were further able to explain relationships that seemed to develop as the process went on. I feel children grew more confident over time as visits became more regular and they came to feel increasingly secure and comfortable in my presence. This seems to be reflected in these comments which indicate a far more relaxed relationship than might otherwise have been the case:

We see you in a different perspective... when we didn't do research we didn't really talk to you as much, now we come up whenever we want and have a chat. (Mel, exit interview, 19.07.12)

We see you different. In research you come across as less strict and you seem more fun and less serious. (Eve, exit interview, 18.07.12)

Although, one comment indicated that there was still a level of maintaining the figure of authority, despite the subsequent qualification.

You're not really different because you still expect the same level of behaviour from us, but you kind of laugh a bit more in research than you do normally. (Chelsey, exit interview, 18.07.12)

For me, some of the comments have wider implications for moving forward in my role as headteacher and my perception amongst children around school. I have always viewed myself as being open, welcoming and accessible, although some of the children's remarks would suggest otherwise. While I don't necessarily see myself as

such, it seems as if children appear to view me as intervening in two extremes, either for reward or sanction.

- *We wouldn't normally have meetings with you and when you are in your office it's different, we wouldn't usually be there unless we've been naughty or extra good. (Rachel, exit interview, 19.07.12)*
- *You are less imposing in research... when you do assemblies and things you come across as strict and imposing, the one we must obey, the person in charge, but in research you're the person we can speak to when we need help. It seems more comfortable to ask for help, like your job is to sort out some of our problems. (Eve, exit interview, 18.07.12)*
- *I once got sent up to get some books and I thought I would get shouted at. (Louise, exit interview, 19.07.12)*

I suppose the role of headteacher is intrinsically linked to the notion of power within the school where I am probably seen as the ultimate arbiter of many things, specifically for children this is often linked to rewards and sanctions. As long as children don't feel frightened maybe it's not a bad thing that I project an image of being 'the person in charge.' Two comments regarding headteachers in general were fascinating, particularly as both children have only been at the one school and I am the only head they have experienced.

- *Heads can be strict if you get on their wrong side, but it's good to get to know them better for good reasons. (Brad, exit interview, 19.07.12)*
- *Headteachers can be really scary. (Helen, exit interview, 18.07.12)*

As an insider researcher Perryman (2011) stated that she was very aware of power relations whilst conducting interviews making special efforts to ensure respondents were relaxed and put at ease; she further made efforts to conform to what she felt were teacher standards and expectations. For example, she was conscious of her dress and attempted to dress in a similar way to teachers in school in an effort to be thought of as a teacher by others. For me, this was not really an option as the children were certainly aware of my role as headteacher in the school. However, my feeling is that, as stated previously, children did seem to be able to recognise a distinction between my roles, essentially, within and outside of the research process. Indeed, I wonder whether they felt that we were all part of a community of researchers and saw me as just another

member of the group when research was in the foreground. Eve's comment when speaking about how she saw my role in the process could be seen to support this idea,

You seem to be more of a friend, you can discuss things that the children probably won't discuss with other people. Most people won't really come up and talk to you naturally about. But in the research group it seems like you're someone to talk to when you need help or just need to sort out some thoughts and ideas (Eve, exit interview, 18.07.12).

If I accept this as a possibility, I feel that in some ways, as this 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991) developed, my role veered away from the notion of leading a taught research programme, increasingly to that of supervisor who children saw as a useful checking point.

Chapter 6 – Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In this thesis I set out to analyse as a case study an initiative in a primary school where children were encouraged to be researchers. The study drew on theoretical perspectives and practices concerned with children as researchers within the wider context of research involving children, the development of the pupil voice agenda and the power relations within school. It was particularly concerned to examine the conditions necessary for children to successfully conduct research in a primary school. Although I set out with an open-ended aim of observing and examining what happens when children are encouraged to be researchers, allowing for themes or ideas to emerge during the study, there were some key questions I focused on from the beginning.

These were:

- What do children need to know and do to be researchers?
- Are children able to conduct their own research?
- What can children learn from being researchers?

The following chapter considers these questions and, along with other findings, relates them to relevant literature.

6.2 Ethical considerations

When considering ethical issues in practice I feel that the approach I used as a researcher maintained a concentration on values and principles throughout and thus reflected the style promoted by Hendrick (2008) and Morrow (2008), rather than merely following the application of general rules. Such a technique emphasises the need for researchers to apply high standards to the governance of their conduct in order that any processes followed remain ethical. I feel it was in such a way that I approached my work with regard to both children as researchers and as gatekeeper creating access to

other children in school as subjects. The same approach was also encouraged in the children conducting their own research.

Taking a more particular focus, this study also illustrated ethical issues facing insider researchers, specifically within a school with its customary authority roles and associated power implications. Bearing this in mind there is almost a requirement for a more deliberative response to overcome this and I feel that central to this is how children are viewed. (Whilst power issues are intrinsically linked to ethical issues I feel they were related to the project as a whole and as such they are discussed in more detail on page 155). As an active practitioner, and headteacher, with the ultimate responsibility for the constant, day-to-day safeguarding of children within school, this particular facet is prominent within my thinking (and probably that of most practitioners). Whilst this does not reflect a deliberate ethical position, I feel it is one that reflects Fielding's (2012) notion of 'rights with care'. This may be seen as a 'self-policing' approach but when it is so intrinsically linked to everyday professional duties, it is an approach that seems pertinent. This aspect seems to have a clear link to one of the three identified key ethical areas (Nairn & Clarke, 2012; Gallagher, 2010; Kellett, 2010) that of consideration for the well-being of the research participant, including as Kellett (2010) states, protection from all kinds of harm not just physical, but mental and emotional harm as well.

A further identified area for consideration is that of voluntary, informed consent of the participant to take part in the research. With regard to this I believe it was important to give children the initial choice to participate with as much information as possible to make that an informed choice. Gallagher (2010, p.15) claims this rests on the following four core principles:

- The involvement of an explicit act, for example a written agreement

- Consent can only come if participants are informed and understand something of the nature of research with verbal discussion of any written explanation being advocated.
- Consent must be voluntary with no coercion
- Consent must be re-negotiable with children able to withdraw at any point

He goes on to suggest that the negotiation of informed consent with children is difficult as it is something they are unused to.

Having participated in the taught research skills sessions all children (60 in total) were given the opportunity to join a research group. I explained, as clearly as possible, what this would entail (although with the benefit of hindsight, at the outset I was probably unsure of the direction the study would take). I also clarified that anyone who was interested would need to take a letter home explaining the project to parents as I needed their agreement as well. This letter required the signature of both child and parent. Kim (2012) suggested that children participating in her study had a sense of obligation to participate as they wished to please the adult teacher. In this case, I considered that by giving children the initial choice of taking a letter or not, any pressure to participate from me or their parents, could be reduced significantly, whilst still maintaining a gatekeeper role for parents. The eventual take-up of around 40% would suggest that a considerable number of children felt no pressure to participate. Whilst the acquisition of parental permission was important I feel that ensuring children wanted to take part meant they were more likely to be motivated in their participation. Children were also given the option to withdraw at any point, which some of them chose to do. They were also allowed to re-engage which raised other issues and may have been a cause of some problems between children.

For the children as researchers, access to subjects was negotiated by them, with me as headteacher acting as a gatekeeper. Initially, I provided support by approaching teachers to help identify convenient times for researchers to conduct their work,

however, as the study progressed children became increasingly independent, and probably more confident and made their own arrangements. The importance of choice is recognised as a key element of Bucknall's (2010) model and, in this instance, giving children choices to organise themselves allowed them to define their own ways of working and reduce adult influences as much as possible. Part of the ongoing training was to ensure that children explained as clearly as possible to subjects what was involved in participation; most did this verbally, but some did so in writing. All children involved as subjects were asked and did so through choice, indeed, the vast majority, especially younger children, were very keen to be involved. In these instances my role, as headteacher and gatekeeper, was to ensure nothing researchers did placed anyone at risk. I found that children as researchers were extremely careful in considering the needs of their subjects and for example were conscious throughout of maintaining anonymity in written work. Children did encounter some of the difficulties that I did, such as subjects who opted to withdraw from participation during their research work and as such didn't complete things. Researchers' comments indicated that they maintained an awareness of ethical issues throughout their work. It is possible that as children conducting research they were more aware of the feelings of their peers than adults would have been. As a consequence they were keen to be as fair as possible with them and maybe their closer proximity in age helped them have greater empathy with subjects.

The third area for consideration is that of respect for the confidentiality and privacy of participants. Perryman (2011) refers to the nature of the confidentiality of school in which her research took place and the ease of which identification, given knowledge of her, was possible. This would also be the case for me and the school in the study, although in this case there may be some implications of identification for the school, the outcomes are really about the process of children acting as researchers and my role in that process. To maintain the confidentiality regarding children who participated as researchers I chose to use pseudonyms to protect their identity. An issue that

presented itself to both me and children as researchers was that of children, having been conditioned by normal school practice, putting their name on surveys or questionnaires. However, in their presentations and written reports children were fastidious in maintaining their participants' anonymity. Perryman (2011) also found she had access to material that she was unable to use due to issues of sensitivity. Whilst there were few examples of this in my work, some of the comments made by the children regarding certain staff members were less than complimentary and these did remain unused.

Whilst ethical considerations are obviously important in studies such as this, it is important to emphasise the point that the overall approach, and the need for careful deliberation throughout such a project, is more important than following some sort of prescriptive checklist. I feel this reflects the view of Gallagher (2010, p.26) who suggests ethical practice should be seen as 'an ongoing process of questioning, acting and reflecting.' Although I believe there were probably occasions when my constant awareness and thoughts of being fair and not asserting authority possibly led to problems. I feel this was evident in my reticence to press some participants to better support their colleagues, and as a consequence relationship issues between children arose.

6.3 Relationships and power

As the work progressed, it became evident that the importance of relationships and underlying power relations played an integral part in the project, and that what children needed to know and do to be researchers was linked to the conditions created by these relations. Indeed, the interrelated nature of the factors creating the conditions for children to undertake research makes it difficult to analyze them in isolation as they were seemingly intertwined in a more holistic sense. A supplementary constituent of these conditions related to questions surrounding my own role in the process. As headteacher, teacher, doctoral researcher, co-researcher and supervisor of the

children's research, I played a central part in creating the milieu within which children were able to conduct their research. Indeed, the unfolding relationships between the children and me were a further key focus area for my study. A further original question regarding what children could learn from being researchers also broadened out as it appeared that there may be other advances to be made from children being involved in conducting their own research. Methodologically the study differed from a number of others in that it ran over a considerably longer period of time (two academic years), involved no external researchers and allowed for on-going, continuous contact between an adult 'supervisor' and children conducting research, thereby giving children considerably more time and experience to develop as researchers.

The prominence of relationships in my study reflected the model of 'factors and processes which impact on children as researchers' created by Bucknall (2010, p.8) reflecting the complex, interconnected nature of such work. Within such a project one has to take note of a whole range of relationships including the following:

- Adult researcher (in this case the headteacher) and children
- Children within the research group
- The research group and other adults
- The research group and other children

In this model she recognizes the pervasive nature of power, closely linked to the centrality of dialogue and communication, which she suggests are 'heavily influenced by the exercise of power and are key factors in the children's and adults' experiences of CaR initiatives' (p.7). I believe this suggests a Foucauldian perspective of power with its diverse and complex web of relations and reflects Foucault's (1980, p.98) notion that 'power is employed and exercised through a netlike organization.' As such power has to be viewed as far-reaching as it encompasses a wide range of factors that impacted upon the study including decisions affecting the initial set up and the way the initiative was viewed, how it was seen and valued as it progressed, and the complex relations at

different levels, within the immediate project, within the institution, as well as external influences on the school.

Kim (2012, p.269) suggests that as 'the researcher's experience in the context is similar to that of the participants, they have common understanding and better relationships with each other.' However, I believe that different relationships existed previously between them and me and therefore, I wouldn't necessarily expect the same degree of familiarity. Indeed, I feel that relationships between children and me probably grew and changed over time, as familiarity within the research process increased and we became more like team members than teacher and taught. What's more, I feel in the case of my work with children my experiences as headteacher within the school would be considerably different to that of the children, given our roles and perceived positions. For the children, their degree of familiarity was probably subject to change, depending upon the age and previous relationship they had with their subjects. So, whilst familiarity with the organisational culture and established routines offers the opportunity for researchers to access and exploit more privileged information, through a better developed intuition for the context, this is not a short cut to worth and there is still a need for rigorous research to be conducted.

With a specific focus on whether children were able to successfully conduct research, one needs to examine the conditions under which the research took place and establish their influence on the process. Before looking at other factors, I need to state that in this case, an essential requirement for successful children's research was a group of enthusiastic and committed children. In this example, there were certainly enough children (20 moved to Phase 2) who dedicated considerable time, effort, thought and care to their research projects and it is difficult to imagine that, without this, any similar project would be successful. In this respect I feel this case supports Bucknall's (2010) claim that motivated children are a key driving factor in the success of CaR programmes and some of the reasons that emerged for this will be examined

later. A further factor highlighted by this study is the role played by motivated and influential adults in supporting them. Fielding (2011) stresses the importance of relationships in a drive for an ultimate aspiration of genuine participatory democracy within schools and I believe this study placed significant emphasis upon relationships between the child researchers and me. I believe the study further demonstrates that this relationship was based upon an enabling view of the capacities of children, a fundamental element of Fielding's notion, and also reflecting the position of Lundy (2011, p.733) that 'the key to involving children as co-researchers in a way that is respecting of their rights is ultimately dependent on how the children are perceived by the adult researchers.' An approach of this nature avoids a trap outlined by Fielding (2012) and Wisby (2011) of children's voice being used as a management tool, and simply reflecting current methods of self-evaluation. I frequently come across colleagues in a number of schools where reference to children's voice refers to the gathering of children's opinions as a part of a process of monitoring teaching staff. This simply mirrors the latest approach used by Ofsted during school inspections and represents Fielding's (2012) notion of compliance with a prevailing fad. It also supports the belief of Bucknall (2010, p.10) when she suggests that 'schools need to pay close attention to their reasons for wishing to engage with CaR initiatives and to understand that these might be in conflict with those of the children.'

As stated the nature of this study contrasted to others in that the main support for children as researchers came from me as a headteacher, an insider to the school. This latter point is significant as the traditional hierarchical structure of schools rests considerable power and influence in the hands of the headteacher. This was reflected in the study of Davies (2011, p.76) where not only did approval have to be sought from the head for the project to run, but also it was felt that the 'head's participation gave the project legitimacy.' This reflects the authority resting with a headteacher and indicates more than just permission being required, it also suggests the head's support is an important contribution to the overall effectiveness of the project. Given this hierarchical

structure, which is difficult to envisage changing in the current climate where so much responsibility rests with one post, the authority and associated power of the headteacher cannot necessarily be reduced. As a result, what becomes essential to such projects is the approach taken and the ways of working that avoid what Fielding (2012) refers to as 'patronage'. I would like to believe that this study reflects such an approach and engages with the reassessment of childhood seeing children as creative and, with appropriate support and encouragement, capable of taking the lead.

I believe that my study demonstrated that the role of the supporting adult is both complex and difficult to manage, reflecting the view of Woodhead (2010) who emphasizes the challenge and amplified role of adults in supporting children for effective participation. The continuous nature of this study illustrated the changing nature of the supporting adult role and its adaptation and progressive development linked to the changing capacities and needs of children. This latter point was particularly evident over the course of the project where as an adult, insider researcher the supervisory element had to become increasingly 'of the moment' and responsive to the requirements and demands of the children. This is a point that could possibly be overlooked in a short-term project. The relatively instant or quick access to a supporting adult was also important as children were able to seek assistance and advice almost as and when they required it, offering a potential contrast to many other projects supported by external researchers. For similar longer term projects using internal staff to support the process this seems to be a rather pertinent point.

Another aspect of power relations in research with children as researchers is the degree to which power could be misused. The adult role in this and other such projects is inextricably linked to power relationships and authority within a school. Kim (2012) suggests that power relations represent a potential concern in research with children when an insider researcher is involved, as the researcher is more likely to be in a position of power; this position she feels is open to misuse. She further suggests that

reducing these unequal power relations is more difficult for an insider researcher. On reflection I am not sure that this was the situation in my study, although there were times when it demonstrates that an influential, supportive adult can influence power to affect the process. Hill et al (2004) asserted that power is a vital concept in moving the participation agenda forward and I feel that in this instance, it was my role as the headteacher, rather than simply an insider researcher, that played a role in creating the climate and conditions for the research project. As outlined in the previous chapter, such things as the meeting with governors, a determination that children's findings should be acted upon, and the opportunities for children to access other children and staff, were all affected by my status and helped to raise the standing of the research group. One could possibly claim that working with children acting as researchers helps to mitigate against some of the worst potential excesses of adult assertions of power, but I feel this is far too simplistic an argument. This case demonstrates that although the different roles undertaken by the researcher were impossible to separate entirely there had to be a degree of adaptation to settle on one that varied according to changing situations. In this sense, different roles came to the fore at different times, as if set along some sort of continuum. A key notion that did emerge related to this was that children were able to differentiate between these inter-changeable roles rather than by defining them in the way I have done. They seemed able to recognise a different kind of headteacher from the one they had come to know and adapted accordingly. This offers a contrast to the findings of Barratt-Hacking & Barratt (2010, p.380) who found that 'children had existing relationships with the school-based adults (and) it was difficult for children to move away from their existing compliant role.'

Indeed, I wonder whether they felt that we were all part of a 'community of researchers' and saw me as just another member of the group when research was in the foreground (see p.168-170 for further discussion). If I accept this as a possibility, I feel that in some ways, as this 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger 1991) developed, my role veered away from the notion of leading a taught research programme, increasingly to that of

supervisor who children saw as a useful checking point and resource. Children's assurance was reflected in the way they resisted some of my attempts to influence or guide their work, for example the Eco group (p. 126). In these cases children felt comfortable and confident enough to ignore me and continue to follow their own chosen course of action, which I encouraged. One has to question whether this would have been the case had the 'headteacher' told them to do so. As mentioned earlier Lundy et al (2011) points to the key element of adult perceptions of children, however, given the reactions of some children in this case one could reverse this comment and ask whether the perception children have of adult researchers has an influence on their engagement and eventual success, or not?

Whilst much of the literature on children's participation refers to an imbalance of power between adults and children, this study illustrated other elements such as power relations within groups of children and children using some form power knowledge in relations with other adults, albeit as conceivable agents of the headteacher. Child researchers were almost given an unparalleled status within school, accessing areas that other children didn't, such as their peers as subjects, classes and teachers during curriculum time and unprecedented access to me as headteacher. In this respect, researchers and their work gained prominence in school and potentially helped equalise power levels. These types of action upon others' actions seem to reflect Foucault's (1982) definition of power. In some ways it almost lead to a shift in the norm found elsewhere in the school's power relations, particularly when the research group recognised it or even exploited it, by using such phrases with adults, as 'Mr Jones has asked us to ...' or 'We need to do this for Mr Jones.' In this sense, it seems that 'Mr Jones' supplied the children with a mandate for their increased powers.

The previous chapter examined group relations and illustrated the power dynamics present between the children, highlighting some of the inequalities that existed. The issue of intermittent participation seemed to create more of an issue for the children as

researchers than it did for me as an adult. It reflects the findings of Gallagher (2008b), who acknowledged nonconformity in his school-based work where children only joined in to avoid classwork or simply refused to participate at all. Indeed, some children in this case encountered a refusal to participate, such as the example of Chelsey (p. 130) where children, as her subjects, left her experiment part way through because it was break time. These are further illustrations of the complex network of relations found within school and exemplify the assertion of Foucault (1978, p.95) that 'where there is power there is resistance.' The resolution of the issue within groups reflected that some children were better able to assert themselves. It seemed to illustrate Arnot & Reay's (2007) notion that some children have better acquired the pedagogic voice and are, therefore, better able to express their views within the language of school and also the 'cultivated man' of Bourdieu & Passeron (1977, p.35), who has acquired greater competency within the culture, is recognized by peers. Such a scenario presents potential questions for consideration in similar projects, namely, where does responsibility lie for the management of group dynamics and how much is it up to the adult researcher to take a lead or should children be allowed to make these choices and deal with the issues independently?

With regard to power, the example mentioned previously regarding my decision to halt the research process in the build-up to SATs, is an example of external influences affecting the in-school process and seems to reflect another idea of Foucault (1982), that of the ubiquitous power of the state and power relations being rooted within a social network. Although I would like to think of myself as an independent thinker in terms of my leadership, one who does not allow others to dictate what I do, in this instance my position was certainly influenced by external factors. My independent authority to act was certainly undermined by the power agenda emanating from the state and the necessity to get the good results that in due course, increase my freedom to act independently. Ultimately, I had to accept that the 'day job' of headteacher is my prime role as an employee and is what 'pays the bills' and, therefore, had to take

precedence. I suppose it also recognises the fact that I am also responsible for many other things as well as other people. Within the earlier section on power I asked the following questions:

1. Given the nature of power can the balance truly be transferred?
2. Is the empowerment of pupils really possible?

Given my response in the above example, despite movement in the right direction, one would have to question whether these were genuinely achievable in my situation.

6.4 Children as researchers

My original questions were focussed upon children's ability to conduct their own research and these were:

- What do children need to know and do to be researchers?
- Are children able to conduct their own research?

When attempting to establish whether children were able to successfully conduct research, one needs to examine the conditions under which the research took place and establish their influence on the process. As stated previously an essential ingredient for success was a group of committed and motivated children reflecting the model of Bucknall (2010) who identified the importance of motivation on the part of children as a significant factor in their active involvement in CaR projects. She linked this very closely to choice of research topic and ownership in a similar way to Lundy (2007) who identified space as a key element of provision. Within this she emphasised children being given the opportunity to express views and the need for choice and the avoidance of children merely being used to investigate pre-determined adult issues. In my study I believe children responded positively to being given a range of choices that went beyond mere topic choice and included data collection methods and children setting their own agendas with regard to their research. By allowing children choices I believe they responded positively, realising that their work was being taken seriously and thereby overcoming another de-motivating factor identified by Bucknall.

There were other conditions that I feel contributed to the children's successful research. In the first instance, it was important that children had a base level of knowledge which allowed them to begin the process of undertaking research. This phase required a 'teacher', a basic research skills programme, in this case I adapted the programme proposed by Kellett (2005) and suitable time for that programme to be taught. Unlike other programmes (Burton et al, 2010; Kellett, 2010; Frost, 2007) where this aspect was undertaken by external academics or researchers I took on this taught element as an internal practitioner. In some ways this seemed to provide certain advantages as I had internal practitioner knowledge of the children, which enabled me to teach the programme to classes of mixed-ability children taking account of their previous learning. I also had ample experience of teaching coupled with flexibility in delivery times according to any amendments I made. For example, the delivery of the initial programme to two parallel classes, one with a slight delay, proved to be useful as it allowed me to make changes to the programme as I went along, although it could be argued that one class potentially got a 'better deal'. In terms of moving forward, using assessment in practice, this allowed me to refine the taught element according to the responses of the children. By beginning with this front-loaded training programme children were able to acquire some basic skills and understanding which allowed them to trial a range of data collection methods. I believe it was important that they were given the early opportunities to try methods in a more controlled and supported way, before they undertook their own work. In this way they could feel confident in their more independent use of methods later in the process.

This leads to a further key difference between my study and others which was the length of time children were given to become embedded in research techniques. For example, Frost (2007) completed her project over seven weeks in a total of 13 hours, Burton et al (2010) completed their study in eight sessions, whilst Malone (2012) saw children involved in two or three taught sessions prior to some becoming part of a research team over a project which ran for four months. The extended length of this

study, some 22 months, allowed for a move to a more practice-based method which saw children respond well to a 'learning in practice' approach. Building on Lundy's (2007) model, Lundy & McEvoy (2012) augmented the importance of capacity building for children's participation within the 'voice' element as a key factor in enabling children to articulate their views. Whilst this views the need for adult support in this process as a right, I believe that to make participation genuinely meaningful support also requires account be taken of what Fielding (2011) refers to as an enabling view of children's capacities. For me, this was enhanced by giving children this extended time as it allowed them to become immersed in their research role and permitted them the opportunity to develop skills, reflect upon them and refine them over the programme, predominantly at times of their choosing, thus addressing a concern raised by Thomson (2011), that of a lack of support to enable children to participate more fully. I feel this approach represented the genuine meaningful participation acknowledged as significant by both Bucknall (2010) and Lundy (2007).

Through the extended time children demonstrated (as shown in the data analysis chapter) that they can accept, use and adapt a range of taught methods of data collection. This supports the findings of Barratt-Hacking and Barratt (2010, p.380) who found that 'children played a significant role in developing and implementing research methods ... that were 'child friendly' (and) sensitive to children's experience and that enabled children to express themselves.' Indeed they took on challenges to improve and create their own methods, in some cases these were quite innovative approaches. The example of Louise and Rebecca (p. 101) where they used a wordsearch to develop participant knowledge of an area could even be said to reflect Lundy & McEvoy's (2012) point of developing the capacity of participants prior to participation, yet the children certainly had no knowledge of that research. With ever-growing capacity and independence children were able to control their own approaches to data collection (with some support) and set their own research agenda. The extended period of time enabled them to demonstrate that, whilst they made mistakes, they were

perfectly capable of recognising and addressing them by reflecting, amending and improving their work. They were then able to analyze and interpret data, present their findings and make clear recommendations in their own ways. In certain instances they proved capable of seeing things from a different viewpoint to adults in similar situations. During this extensive work an important condition for success was the provision of on-going, responsive training and support. As the study progressed it is fair to say that this assistance changed, becoming more of a one-to-one approach, with individual groups requiring different inputs at different times, coupled with different levels of support. I believe my study demonstrates that children can be taught approaches to enable them to conduct their own research, however taught programmes need to be amended to suit the particular needs of the children within the setting. Good practice will ensure this process of acquiring the necessary research skills is reflected upon and adapted as it goes along.

In keeping with Lundy (2007) I felt that in this study it was important for children to be given an audience and the potential to influence agendas. Not only does it seem almost pointless to involve children as researchers to seek views and then ignore them, but also seems an important part of the process is missed if there is no follow-up for children. These ideas move beyond mere consultation and if dealt with positively avoid one of the issues with student voice activities identified by Thomson (2011), where the act of speaking is seen as an end in itself rather than in shaping ways forward and thus leads to little follow-up. Lundy (2007) recognises a significant degree of overlap between audience and influence claiming that children have a right to have their views listened to and, where appropriate, acted upon.

In this case I feel that having the on-going ear of the headteacher meant that children had an almost perpetual audience to share thoughts and ideas with and discuss ways forward. They were also given an opportunity to present their findings to a group of school governors. Children's positive response to this meeting demonstrated the importance they attached to it, supporting one of Bucknall's (2010) central themes, that

of outcomes, which she links to a need for dissemination. It also helped overcome what Stafford et al (2003) report as one of the greatest disappointments and frustrations felt by children involved in research, that they rarely see an endpoint in terms of actions or even get to present their findings. Although the influence children had in this case could be seen as fairly limited some of the outcomes outlined in previous chapter reflect Kellett's (2010, p.8) suggestion that 'children obtaining knowledge ... from their insider perspective has the potential for change and transformation'.

I would have liked the children to have been able to present their data more widely however due to time constraints at the end of the study this was not possible.

I believe this case demonstrated that children are capable of presenting data in a range of forms, although they seem to be better able to do this in a spoken form than a written one. The study also demonstrated that whilst data analysis proved difficult for some children with support and guidance they were capable of some insightful work. With regard to audience and influence the children also proved able to deal sensitively and confidently with difficult issues when they arose. For example the potential criticism of an adult-run after-school club (and confirming those criticisms to the headteacher) could have proven too daunting a prospect for some, however, children demonstrated assurance in doing this and I feel this reflected the respect given to their position. A key point in moving such projects forward is closely linked to how children are viewed as researchers by adults and I believe this study supports the view of Lundy et al (2011, p.733) that 'recognition of (children's) competence, agency, and entitlement to influence decisions affecting them' is key to a perception of children as researchers and their involvement in a rights-respecting way.

6.5 Benefits for children from research

A number of other studies point to the potential for additional benefits generally from children's increased participation, and specifically from participating as researchers (Bucknall, 2010; Kellett 2010; Oldfather, 1999). As evidenced in the previous chapter I

believe my study, and in particular the comments and perceptions of children, indicated that children as researchers can bring about other benefits, such as the development of transferable skills and increased confidence and self-esteem, which can impact on other aspects of children's schooling. As a caveat to this one has to recognise that it is possible that some of these potential benefits could be claimed as outcomes of the conventional school curriculum, although my experience would suggest that this would be very much dependent upon the context in which the curriculum was being studied and the manner in which it was being taught.

Children's comments certainly indicated that they felt their knowledge of research and research skills had improved over the project and that in some examples this led to further consequences with potential for perceived improvements in other curricular areas. A number also cited a feeling of increased confidence from participating, reflecting the findings of Barratt-Hacking & Barratt (2010, p.380) who also found that 'children grew in confidence and capacity as researchers ... as the research progressed.' A potential reason for this could be the increased opportunities for communication, such as questioning, initiating dialogue and presenting and discussing ideas, both with other children and adults. These potential benefits for children present a dilemma for schools as they may feel they have to strike a balance between them and the time pressures identified by Bucknall (2010) of externally imposed testing and curriculum. Indeed as Thomson (2010) and Fielding (2011) point out such learning is not seen to be valued within the demands and accountability linked to exam performance. Facing such a choice schools may have to decide whether they place an internal value on the development of such skills or that from a rights-based position it simply represents a correct course of action.

In addition to recognising some of these benefits children also cited enjoyment and this seemed to be a key motivating factor in sticking with the project over such a long term. For children enjoyment seemed to have clear links to being with, and working relatively

independently with, friends and possibly being allowed a greater choice in directing their own work than would be usual. As the project progressed and children became increasingly assured they became more comfortable in finding and operating in their own chosen space and although the ICT suite became a focal point, particularly during dinnertimes, children could be found in a variety of places. As the project went on, and I believe they came to see me in a different light, they became increasingly comfortable working in my office, as they would approach me for discussion and then continue to work there. I wonder whether the children saw themselves as members of a specific community of learners? Lave & Wenger (1991) developed the notion that learning is situated in communities of practice and happens beyond educational intention through, what they call, 'legitimate peripheral participation' in social practice. To ascertain whether a community of practice existed, the operation of the research group could be compared to the three structural characteristics identified by Wenger et al (2002). Firstly, I believe the research group had a common ground with defined issues, meeting their first characteristic of a domain of knowledge. The children's comments, particularly regarding enjoyment, and my observations of them freely giving up so much of their own time, indicate that they formed a community that cared about this domain, meeting the second characteristic. The final characteristic requires the community to be sharing and developing its core of knowledge to increase effectiveness within their domain, and again I believe children demonstrated this.

In their everyday conversations the children made frequent reference to the 'research group', interestingly this changed over time from 'Mr Jones' research group' to simply the 'research group.' Some of the comments made by children further support the notion of a community of practice and demonstrate that there was some sort of bond (despite all the arguments) between the members of the group. They also indicate that children talked about research independently of me, sharing ideas in their common forum.

- *We could be constantly in the ICT suite enjoying time with my fellow researchers and talking about our ideas. (Chelsey, exit interview, 18.07.12)*
- *I don't want to leave Hilltop because there's not a research group at my High school. (Clare, exit interview, 19.07.12)*
- *When the research group worked in the suite, it was good because we talked about all our ideas. (Mel, exit interview, 19.07.12)*

Wenger et al (2002) outline a deliberate process for the development of a community of practice, although in this case there was no deliberate plan to develop one. Whilst it just seemed to grow as the project unfolded, it seemed to offer relevance to the way the research group went about learning, especially after the initial taught work. Wenger et al also outline five stages of development for such communities, and for me a slight disappointment was that as the community progressed well through the early stages, time limitations meant it was broken up before it reached maturity and achieved its full potential.

6.6 Study design

Reflecting on the study, I would make some changes should I repeat the work. Firstly, I feel that my own sensitivity to the issue of power meant there were occasions when I over-compensated and didn't successfully balance my respective roles. This was predominantly a result of my consciousness of being the headteacher and not wanting the children to perceive that I was over-directing them and exerting power. However, there were times when as supervisor I needed to apply a little gentle pressure to move the process along more quickly. What I believe would have helped would have been defined timelines and deadlines, that were shared with children from the outset, so everyone had a clearer view of the overall process and expectations. Presenting children with 'the big picture' is an important element of the learning process in school and I feel I could have made this more explicit from the beginning.

Whilst my work hinted at the potential wider benefits to children of involvement in the programme, I would have liked to have gained a fuller understanding of the potential for

this. To this end, I feel it would have been useful to have examined this strand throughout the programme, rather than simply at the end, via exit questioning. Also, by collecting parental opinions during the research process I believe I would have gained a different viewpoint which would have contributed to a better understanding in this regard. Whilst the unplanned and informal discussions with parents provided useful supporting evidence, it would have been better had they been planned and regular.

I would approach the taught element differently. As stated earlier this was heavily concentrated within the early part of the programme and whilst acknowledging that front-loading was an essential element, I feel it would have been better to spread the initial sessions out over a longer period. This would have allowed children more time to apply the new skills and techniques before additional ideas were presented to them. I also believe that during this phase I over-estimated how much the children could take in and understand, without gaining the direct experience and immersion that came from practice. Within my analysis I identified issues with children's report writing, feeling that it was intrinsically linked to my expectations of children. In this sense my expectations were that they would produce adult-type research outcomes, which on reflection, were unrealistic. Again, if I were to repeat the programme, I would look to identify and develop more 'child-friendly' approaches and expectations, and make these explicit at the outset. As alluded to earlier, acting as supervisor for all the groups placed great demands upon my time and I believe a repeat study would benefit from either having fewer children involved, or a preferred option, the involvement of more adults in the process, to take on similar roles to mine.

6.7 Further research

I feel that some of the points mentioned above lead into recommendations for further research in the area of 'children as researchers.' I believe that this case demonstrates that children are capable of conducting pertinent research with significant findings. As such, they have the potential to play a positive role in influencing policy in school.

However, I do not believe children can really be expected to act like adult researchers and be judged by the same standards. I feel greater exploration into ways in which children might wish to instinctively carry out an enquiry or do their own research, rather than being expected to take on the methodologies and methods that adult researchers believe are appropriate, would be worthwhile. I would recommend further research to develop a clear framework of expectations for children's research, building upon Bucknall's (2010) model, drawing a clear distinction between children and adults, and what children can be expected to achieve.

Whilst my study hints at the possibility of potential wider benefits to children from participating in the research programme, in line with other works (Kellett, 2006; Oldfather, 1995), it was not a particular focus for me and as a result I did not have enough evidence to draw conclusions from. However, a number of children indicated that they felt more confident as a result of participating in the project and I feel that where children as researchers programmes are used as a basis for research in future, it would be useful to focus on these potential wider benefits. As an extension of this theme, it would also be valuable to establish where short term benefits were identified, whether or not they were extended into high schools and thus, brought about longer term benefits for children.

Although challenges have been identified connected to being an insider-researcher, I believe the use of such a role offers great potential for schools and would like to see the practice develop much more widely.

6.8 The contribution this research has made to the field

Whilst this research represents a local knowledge case study, I believe that, as suggested by Thomas (2010), it can offer insights to others into the understanding of problems or issues based on their individual experience. The research contributes to the body of knowledge surrounding children as researchers by presenting a detailed

study of how a primary school was able to develop this aspect of its practice for a significant number of children. It offers insights into the possibilities of such work and addresses and overcomes a number of the components found in the Bucknall (2010) model of factors and processes which impact on children as researchers. It supports her assertion of the centrality of power issues to such programmes and its exercise in this work can be seen to influence all aspects in a variety of ways. Furthermore, the significance she attaches to dialogue and communication is also evident in this thesis where relationships were found to be of paramount importance, being particularly apparent in the working relationships that developed between children and me.

What especially adds to research in this field is the longer term nature of my study, in contrast to the more short-term nature of many other similar works. This extended timescale, when combined with the insider practitioner-led nature of the project, allowed for on-going and regular contact between children and me. This meant that children were able to become thoroughly immersed in their role as researchers, developing and refining their skills over a considerable time. As such the thesis provides a detailed practical account of the process followed over time in order to truly develop children as researchers with a degree of self-confidence and independence, demonstrating the potential for similar insider-led practice.

In practice, whilst I feel that this work supports a drive for the development of children as researchers as being useful in its own right, it also demonstrates, albeit on a small scale, that children as researchers have much to offer in supporting school development. Indeed, with regard to local policy it would be constructive to see further, more widespread, initiatives relating to participation and children as researchers, working towards an eventual goal reflecting Fielding's (2012) view of lived democracy. This would see fewer tokenistic elements, with children's voices being sought to suggest and support genuine change. Such a move requires a will on the part of individual institutions to further progress this. It would also be encouraging if the

benefits of children as researchers, outlined, were recognised and reflected in national policy. However this currently seems a somewhat forlorn hope amidst the ever-increasing test-related accountability and atmosphere of fear, where political agendas predominate over educational ones.

6.9 Summary of main findings

Whilst I feel that this case study, examining children as researchers, reflects other similar work and demonstrates the criticality of power and relationships as integral components, the long-term, continuous nature of the case, using an insider researcher, also offered a contrast to many others. I believe this case illustrates that children, when presented with the opportunity, under the right conditions, are capable of conducting relevant research in their own ways with outcomes that impacted positively upon school and its practice. In this case the following conditions played a part in enabling children to take on the role of researchers:

- A group of children who are prepared to get involved and commit to the programme
- A front-loaded taught programme, with on-going teaching related to being a researcher, to equip children with basic skills and adapted to their needs
- Opportunities for children to try out approaches in a supported way
- A developmental approach allowing children greater independence to determine their own research and embed skills within a progressively more practice-based method.
- Skilled and influential adult support, so as to provide an appropriate level of help, further teaching and challenge.
- A suitable audience to which outcomes can be presented (preferably with influence to implement action).

Although these conditions are identifiable discretely, a fundamental component for success in such a project, which has an impact upon all elements, relates to the approach taken by adults and the view they hold of children. Whilst the study was not based purely on a rights-based methodology I feel that the foundation was built upon an enabling view of children's capacities, which reflected a rights-based approach. In this way the whole approach echoed Gallagher's (2010) view of ethics as a continuous, reflexive process rather than being merely prescriptive. This element of the case also illustrates the importance of the support of an influential adult and provision of a relevant audience prepared to accept the influence of children. Whilst this reliance on adults could be seen to represent the 'patronage' of Fielding (2011) I would suggest that the spirit in which this is entered into would help overcome this. Whilst this factor stresses the significance of the supporting adult it also highlights the issues faced in taking on this function and the need for skilful and reflective role management. I feel the study offers a view of the potential for similar work within schools when operated internally and supported by internal staff, and demonstrates that children as researchers have much to offer, if given the opportunity, under the appropriate conditions. Whilst this potential seems to be increasingly accepted, I feel all children need more opportunities to conduct similar work.

'You must join the research group. You find out lots of different, new things about how to do research properly. It's fun and definitely not boring. I learnt loads and really enjoyed it.' (Katrina, exit questionnaire, 12.07.12)

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Research report used with children

Recycling and our future: a small-scale investigation of the views of 12 to 14 year olds

Date: 13-02-2004

Lewis Watson

Introduction

I am interested in recycling because I feel very strongly that it is the only way we can save our environment. I think that people don't take recycling seriously enough. We are not doing nearly enough. People who do recycle still only recycle very small amounts and only when it's easy and convenient for them. Also, we need to start thinking about measures to stop people wasting precious resources like water and electricity.

I wanted to find out what children of my age think about recycling. I have the impression that they seem to be very concerned about the environment. It is the world they will grow up in and they have a lot more years to live in it than the grown-ups. I decided to find out exactly how strongly other children felt about this by doing a small research project.

Methodology

I thought that the best way to find out opinions would be to use a questionnaire.

Because I wanted to find out how strongly children felt I didn't want lots of yes and no answers. So I designed a questionnaire with statements about recycling and saving resources with a four point response scale: *strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree*. The nine statements were as follows:

1. Recycling is a good idea.
2. Throwing things away is wasteful.
3. People should be fined if they throw paper away instead of recycling it.
4. Recyclable materials should have a refundable deposit.
5. Being busy is no excuse for not recycling.
6. Disposable nappies should be banned.
7. Carrier bags should have a refundable deposit.
8. People should be allowed a maximum of 700 litres of water a week and no more.
9. No-one should be allowed to cut down a tree unless they plant a new one.

I made the questionnaire anonymous and gave it to all the pupils in Years 6, 7 and 8 at my school (ages 12 to 14).

The Findings

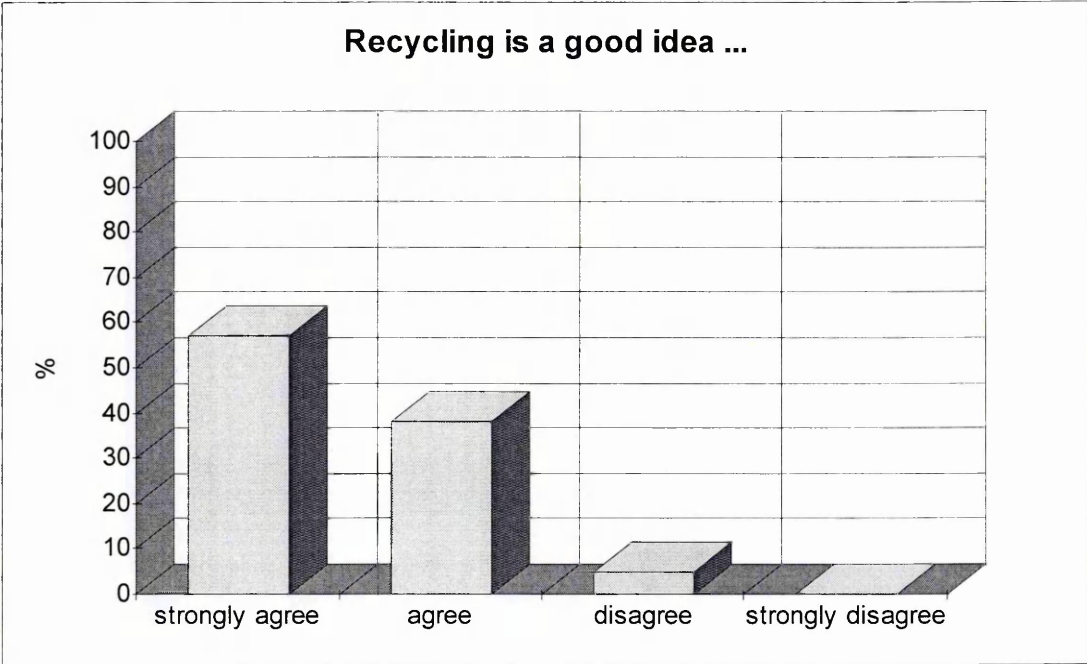


Figure 1 Opinions about whether recycling is a good idea

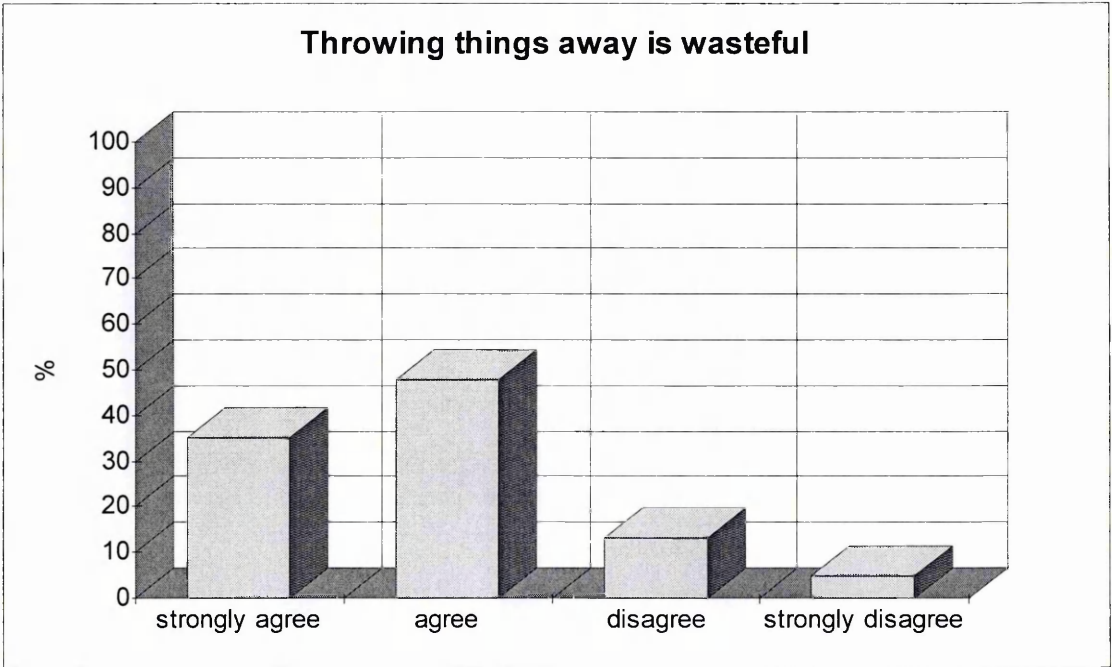


Figure 2 Opinions about throwing things away is wasteful

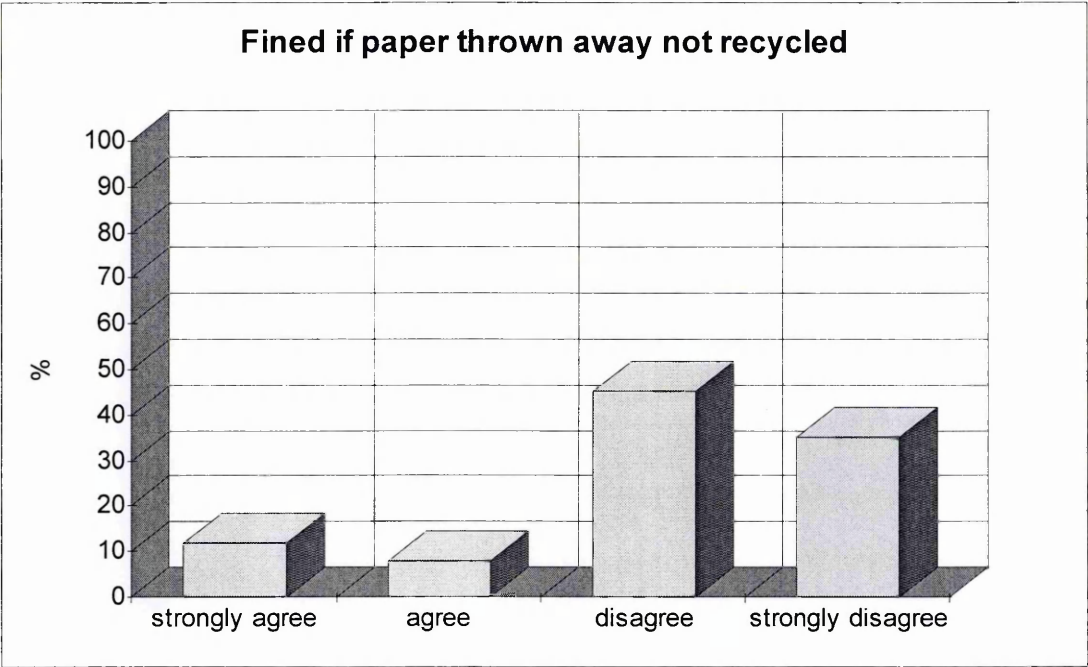


Figure 3 Opinions about whether people should be fined if they throw paper away instead of recycling it

3

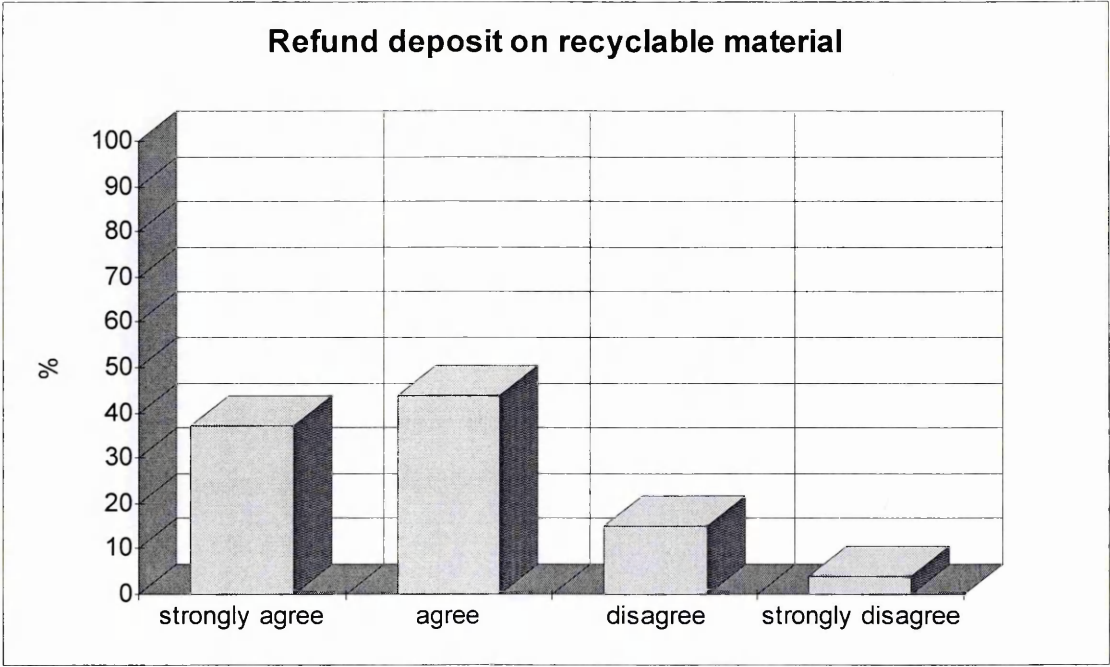


Figure 4 Opinions about whether recyclable materials should have a refundable deposit

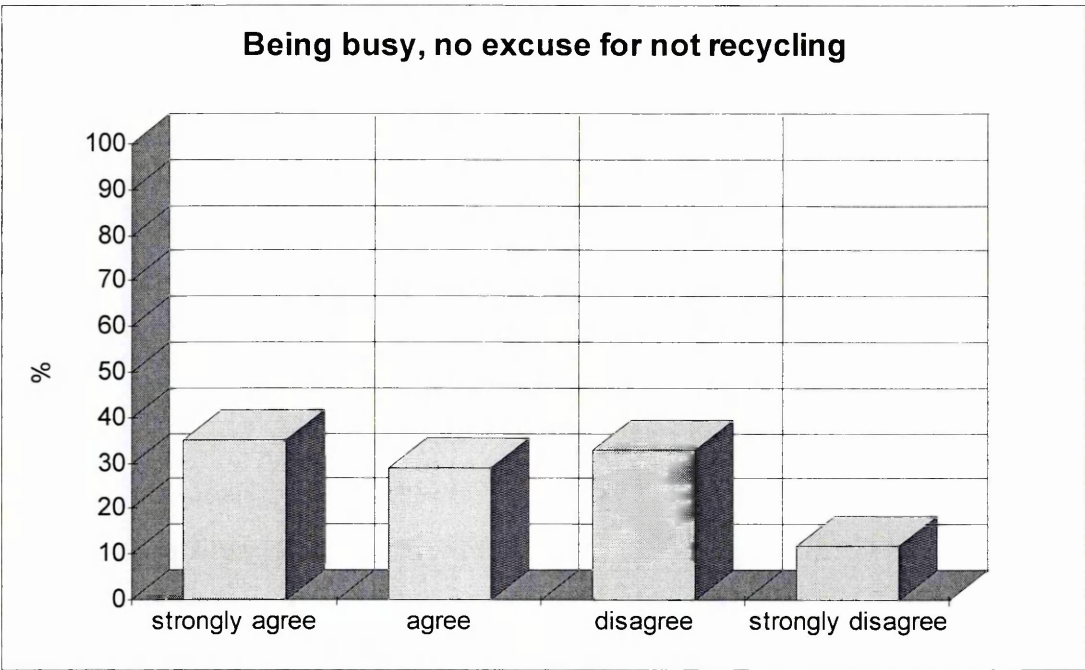


Figure 5 Opinions about whether being busy is an excuse for not recycling

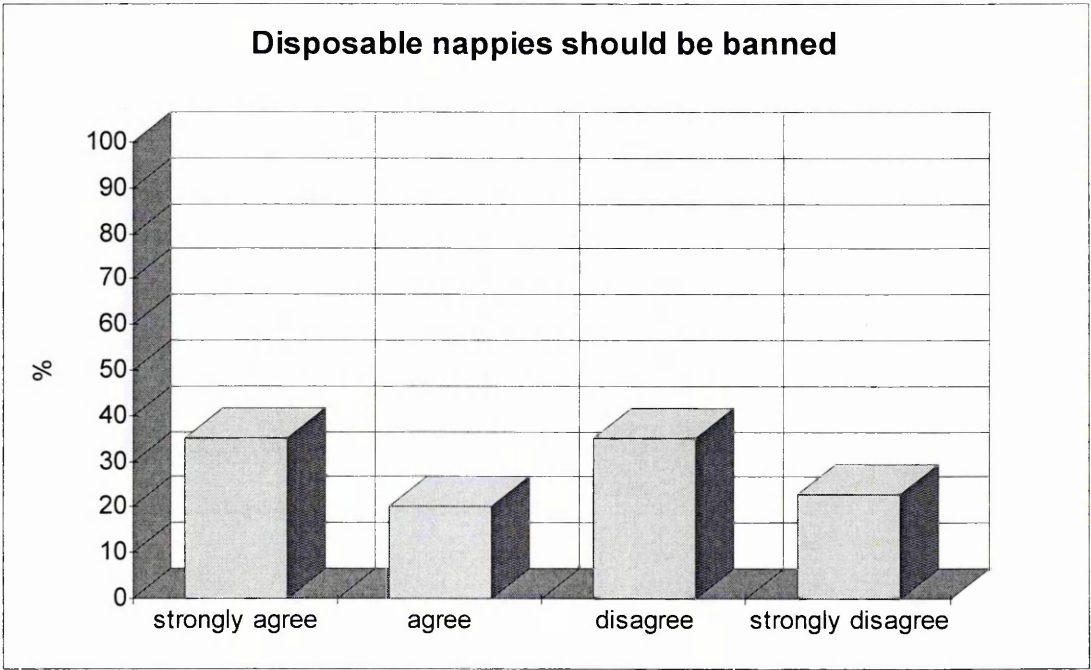


Figure 6 Opinions about whether disposable nappies should be banned



Figure 7 Opinions about whether carrier bags should have a refundable deposit

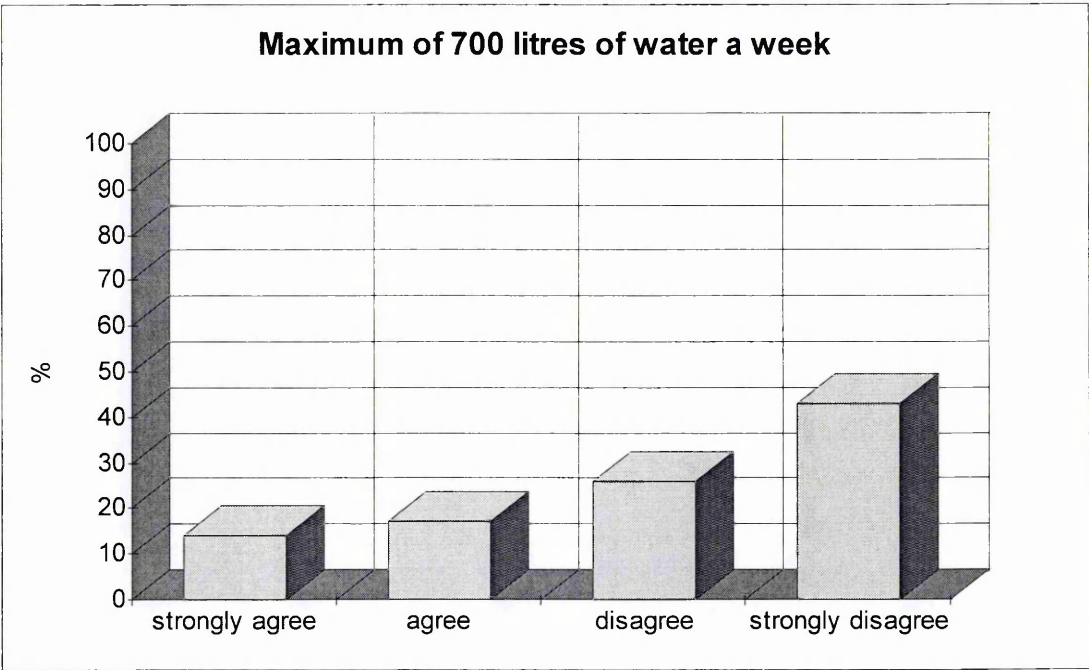


Figure 8 Opinions about whether people should be limited to a maximum of 700 litres of water per week

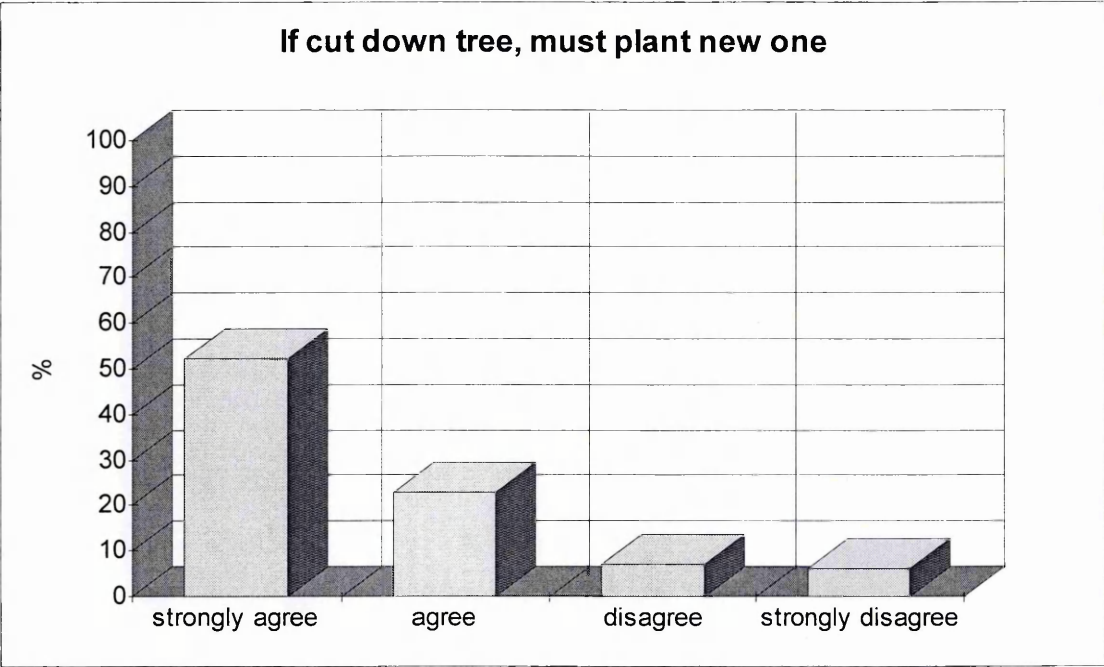


Figure 9 Opinions about whether no-one should be allowed to cut down a tree unless they plant a new one

Analysis and Discussion

In figure 1 only 5% of the children disagreed that recycling was a good idea. Of the 95% who agreed, 57% felt strongly about this. I was surprised that this figure was not higher because I had imagined that more children of my age would feel as strongly as I do about recycling. I was disappointed that 18% disagreed that throwing things away was wasteful (5% of them strongly) and that of the 83% who did agree, only 35% of them did so strongly (figure 2). Only 20% of children agreed that people should be fined if they throw paper away instead of recycling it. Of the 80% who disagreed, 35% did so strongly. This tells me that even though 83% of the children agree that recycling is a good idea (figure 1) only 20% of them are ready to take more extreme steps like fining people if they don't recycle.

From figure 4, I can see that 81% of the children I surveyed in my school agree that recyclable materials should have a refundable deposit (37% strongly). This seems to suggest that children feel we should be prepared to find the extra time to return bottles to get back deposits and if we don't do this then we will have to pay a price through losing the deposit we paid on the bottles. It is interesting that most children agreed with this but did not agree with fining people. Figure 5 shows that 64% agreed (35% strongly) that being busy is no excuse for not recycling. However, I was disappointed

that nearly half the children (45%) disagreed with this. We will never have a better world if people keep using the excuse that they are too busy. Recycling needs effort and if we are too lazy or too busy to bother then we don't deserve to have a better world. I think the lazy ones who can't be bothered are spoiling our world for the ones who can and this is why I think fines would be a good idea.

There was a fairly even split of opinion about whether disposable nappies should be banned. Although I understand that washing nappies creates extra work for busy mums, we still need to remember the importance of recycling and the mountains of rubbish that build up just from disposable nappies alone. Just over half the children (65%) agreed that refundable deposits on carrier bags were a good idea.

The suggestion that people should be allowed a maximum of 700 litres of water a week and no more had little support (31%) and almost half (43%) strongly disagreed.

Again, I find this disappointing because we waste so much water. If we only had a certain amount of water I think we would consider more carefully how we used it and appreciate it a lot more. One of the statements that got most support was the idea that no-one should be allowed to cut down a tree unless they plant a new one. 75% of the children agreed with this (52% strongly). This response didn't really surprise me because children learn a lot about trees and their importance at school. We learn that they give us oxygen and are habitats for animals, so this is something that is close to children in a way that perhaps disposable nappies aren't. Trees are something very real and close to children – we climb them and play games like conkers. However, planting a tree takes effort and it suggests that children are more supportive of this kind of effort being put into protecting our environment and not quite so supportive of the recycling part of protecting our environment.

Conclusions

It has been interesting investigating what children think about recycling, although there were a few surprises. I had hoped that more children would feel as strongly as I do about recycling. I wonder what might have happened if I'd given the same questionnaire to adults. I think perhaps more of them might have agreed to fines for not recycling but also more might have agreed with the excuse that being too busy to recycle was okay. This is something I would like to research in the future and then I could compare the differences between the attitudes of children and adults to recycling.

Appendix 2: Examples of completed framing sheets

Photocopiable Resource 4: Framing a research question 'think sheet'

What are my hobbies and interests?

What do I feel strongly about?

What am I curious about?

What would I like to change if I could?

What's your favorite school lesson?
Who's your favorite school teacher?
What's your favorite colour?
What makes a good teacher? ✓

TOPIC AREA What makes a good teacher?

What aspect of this topic especially interests me?

What exactly am I trying to find out?

Where and how could I find this out?

Think about
what makes a teacher
helps kids.

DRAFT QUESTION

Are there any age or gender issues?

What are the time frames I need to work to?

RESEARCH QUESTION

What makes a good teacher?

Photocopiable Resource 4: Framing a research question 'think sheet'

What are my hobbies and interests?

What do I feel strongly about?

What am I curious about?

What would I like to change if I could?

(Reading), running and football (and football) X

The equipment on the play ground.

TOPIC AREA Sports,

What aspect of this topic especially interests me?

What exactly am I trying to find out?

Where and how could I find this out?

Running and fitness equipment and things

What children feel about the playground and

DRAFT QUESTION

Are there any age or gender issues?

What are the time frames I need to work to?

RESEARCH QUESTION What do people think about the playground and why?

Photocopiable Resource 4: Framing a research question 'think sheet'

25-11-2010

What are my hobbies and interests?

What do I feel strongly about?

What am I curious about?

What would I like to change if I could?

How many people like singing?

How many people come to school every year?

How many people like the playtime minutes?

What gender is the most popular?

How many people like writing in pen?

TOPIC AREA What's your favorite Animal? Dog, cat, gerbil or Hamsters.

What aspect of this topic especially interests me?

What exactly am I trying to find out?

Where and how could I find this out?

How many people in this school like singing? And why?
you could have a yes or no tally chart or go round the classes with a clip board and pencil and paper and count. For yes and count for no.

DRAFT QUESTION

Are there any age or gender issues?

What are the time frames I need to work to?

RESEARCH QUESTION How Many People like singing and why.

Photocopiable Resource 4: Framing a research question 'think sheet'

What are my hobbies and interests?

What do I feel strongly about?

What am I curious about?

What would I like to change if I could?

Hobbies + interests?

Feel strongly about

Curious about to change

Swimming

In danger animals

In robbery

football

killing animals & using them for coats.

shop.

Gymnastics

rock climbing

TOPIC AREA In danger animals

What aspect of this topic especially interests me?

What exactly am I trying to find out?

Where and how could I find this out?

How they feel and how animals live.

You could find this out by asking the kids and teachers in the school.

What are the main animals that are getting killed/hurt.

DRAFT QUESTION What animals do you think are getting hurt the most?

Are there any age or gender issues?

What are the time frames I need to work to?

Yes baby animals are getting killed and hurt, e.g. pigs, lambs, sheep, tigers, lions, pandas and lots more.

RESEARCH QUESTION How do you feel on animals being killed and hurt?

Photocopiable Resource 4: Framing a research question 'think sheet'

What are my hobbies and interests?

What do I feel strongly about?

What am I curious about?

What would I like to change if I could?

Out of year 3, 4, 5 and 6 which is the most enjoyable lesson?

TOPIC AREA

What aspect of this topic especially interests me?

What exactly am I trying to find out?

Where and how could I find this out?

What I am trying to find out is the best lesson. It interests me to see what they like about it and if they actually like school. We could find it out by going round the classes and do a tally chart.

DRAFT QUESTION

Are there any age or gender issues?

What are the time frames I need to work to?

RESEARCH QUESTION

Photocopiable Resource 4: Framing a research question 'think sheet'

What are my hobbies and interests?

What do I feel strongly about?

What am I curious about?

What would I like to change if I could?

My hobbie and Interest is Football.

P.E phase day evly 2 weeks.

Why can't we have more P.E after SCHOOL Clubs.

Have P.E 3 times a week.

TOPIC AREA

What aspect of this topic especially interests me?

What exactly am I trying to find out?

Where and how could I find this out?

Football, Cricket

do people who't p.e phase days evly 2 weeks go round and ask people.

DRAFT QUESTION

Are there any age or gender issues?

What are the time frames I need to work to?

RESEARCH QUESTION How many people want P.e phase at sports every 2 weeks

Appendix 3: Class questionnaires

3.1 Class A – What makes a good teacher?

What makes a good teacher?

This is a questionnaire written by Class A to find out what you think makes a good teacher.

Please circle the box that shows your opinion for each of the statements below.

1 = strongly agree 2 = agree 3 = not sure 4 = disagree 5 = strongly disagree

The first row has been filled in as an example and shows that the person agrees that a good teacher is tall.

	Strongly agree	agree	Not sure	disagree	Strongly disagree
A good teacher is tall	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher is funny	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher is helpful	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher appreciates all the children in their class	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher doesn't shout at anyone	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher makes learning fun	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher needs to be loud	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher makes work challenging	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher needs to help you improve	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher should be patient	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher needs to be smart	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher should know what you need to learn	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher should have good manners	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher should be trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher should be intelligent	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher should be creative	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher be understandable	1	2	3	4	5
A good teacher doesn't need to talk too much	1	2	3	4	5

To help us when we look at the results please tell us a little about yourself.

What year group are you in? _____

Are you a boy or a girl? _____

Thank you for completing our survey.

What makes a good teacher?

These are some questions written by Class A to find out what you think makes a good teacher.

Please try to answer them:

What kind of personality should a good teacher have?

What do you think is the most important thing about being a good teacher?

How do you think a good teacher should behave?

How can a good teacher be helpful?

What do you think makes a good teacher?

Is there anything else you would like to add about what you think makes a good teacher?

To help us when we look at the results please tell us a little about yourself.

What year group are you in? _____

Are you a boy or a girl? _____

Thank you for answering our questions.

3.2 - Class B – The Playground

Version 1 – developed during taught programme.

What do you think about the playground?

This is a questionnaire written by Class B to find out what you think about the school playground and playtimes.

Please tick the box that shows your opinion for each of the statements below.

1 = strongly agree 2 = agree 3 = not sure 4 = disagree 5 = strongly disagree

The first row has been filled in as an example and shows that the person strongly disagrees that the playground is blue.

	Strongly agree	agree	Not sure	disagree	Strongly disagree
The playground is blue	1	2	3	4	5
The playground is about the right size	1	2	3	4	5
There are enough seats in the playground	1	2	3	4	5
The quiet area is a nice place to be	1	2	3	4	5
We need more equipment at playtime	1	2	3	4	5
There are too many trees in our play areas	1	2	3	4	5
The playground is big enough to run around in	1	2	3	4	5
The playground is a safe place to play	1	2	3	4	5
We have enough equipment at playtimes	1	2	3	4	5

What other things would you like to do at playtime to make it better?

What extra equipment would make playtimes better?

How would you change the playground?

To help us when we look at the results please tell us a little about yourself.

What year group are you in? _____

Are you a boy or a girl? _____

3.3 - Version 2 – Developed by the research group

What do you think about the playground?

This is a questionnaire to find out what you think about the school playground and playtimes.

Please tick the box that shows your opinion for each of the statements below.

The first row has been filled in as an example and shows that the person strongly disagrees that the playground is red.

	Strongly agree	agree	Not sure	disagree	Strongly disagree
The playground is red	1	2	3	4	5
The playground is good for all ages of children	1	2	3	4	5
There is enough equipment at playtime	1	2	3	4	5
There is enough equipment at dinnertime	1	2	3	4	5
We have plenty of areas in the sunshine	1	2	3	4	5
There are enough areas of shade	1	2	3	4	5
There are too many teachers on the playground	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers do enough to stop problems	1	2	3	4	5
There should be less football played on the playground	1	2	3	4	5
The playground is a safe place to be	1	2	3	4	5
There is too much rough play on the playground	1	2	3	4	5
The playground is about the right size	1	2	3	4	5
There are enough seats in the playground	1	2	3	4	5
It feels secure to be on the playground					
The quiet area is a nice place to be	1	2	3	4	5
The playground is big enough to run around in	1	2	3	4	5

To help us when we look at the results please tell us a little about yourself.

What year group are you in? _____

Are you a boy or a girl? _____

Thank you for filling in our questionnaire

What do you think about the playground?

This is a questionnaire to find out what you think about the school playground and playtimes.

Please tick the box that shows your opinion for each of the statements below.

The first row has been filled in as an example and shows that the person strongly disagrees that the playground is red.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The playground is red					
The playground is good for all ages of children					
There is enough equipment at playtime					
There is enough equipment at dinnertime					
We have plenty of areas in the sunshine					
There are enough areas of shade					
There are too many teachers on the playground					
Teachers do enough to stop problems					
There should be less football played on the playground					
The playground is secure					
There is too much rough play on the playground					
The playground is about the right size					
There are enough seats in the playground					
It feels secure to be on the playground					
The quiet area is a nice place to be					
The playground is big enough to run around in					
The playground is safe (to reduce accidents)					

To help us when we look at the results please tell us a little about yourself.

What year group are you in? _____

Are you a boy or a girl? _____

What do you normally play outside? _____

What do you think of this questionnaire?

Thank you for filling in our questionnaire

Appendix 4: Letter to participants and parents

SCHOOL LETTERHEAD

28TH January 2011

Dear Parents

I have just begun an doctoral qualification with the Open University, which will focus on developing children as researchers to investigate learning in school. As a part of that I am inviting children to take part in the project and hope that the information below will answer any questions you may have regarding this, whilst at the same time, enabling you to make an informed decision concerning your child's participation.

I am interested in finding out about how children learn and their views of learning, in particular I would like to develop children as researchers so they are able to carry out the investigation themselves. The project will take place over the next two school years and build on the research skills already taught to children in Year 5. I would now like to set up a research group of children for those who would like to undertake some of the research. Children have been asked if they would like to get involved in being part of the group and those who are interested should be able to explain what they will be doing.

Participation in this study is voluntary and anyone who chooses not to take part, will not be adversely affected in any way. Furthermore, children who wish to be involved at the beginning can choose to drop out at any time and any information they have provided can be destroyed.

In addition, I can assure you that all data collected will be anonymised and confidentiality will be assured. If children are referred to in any reports names will be changed. In carrying out this project, I also would stress, that I have a responsibility to behave ethically and in doing so, I will be following the British Educational Research Association's Ethical Guidelines (2004). As this is an entirely voluntary project no one will be paid or recompensed for their work in the study.

The results and outcomes of the project will hopefully have a number of potential benefits for the school. In particular, the findings of this study may be used to identify ways to improve learning and although, children involved may not be around for the changes that could occur, by sharing their experiences, they could help us understand how to better serve the needs of future pupils at the school. Hopefully, those involved will feel their own research skills have improved and may feel more confident about research in the future. Information and findings will be fed back to children, staff and governors, whilst, I will be expected to complete a 50 000 word dissertation to submit for my qualification.

If you have any questions regarding the study please ask me at school. If you have any concerns during the project you may contact Mr J Coburn, Chair of Governors, via the school.

Yours sincerely

Mr P Jones
Headteacher

CONSENT INFORMATION

I give permission for my child, _____, to participate in the research project. In granting this permission I:

- Have fully read this information letter and have had the opportunity to discuss any concerns and questions. I fully understand the nature and character of my child's involvement in this research programme and any foreseeable risks and consequences.
- Understand that my child may refuse to participate in this project at any time and that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my child's participation at any time without any affect on me or my child's future relationship with school.
- Understand that my child is free to refuse to answer any specific items or questions in interviews, questionnaires or other activities

I do not give permission for my child, _____, to participate in the research project.

(Parent/Carer Signature)

(Date)

I would like to take part in the research project and understand what it means for me.

(Child signature)

(Date)

things to think about!!!

- ❖ When???
????? after lunch
- ❖ How many interviews all together??
16 because 2 out of each class 1 boy 1 girl (for different opinions)
- ❖ How many at a time??
1 because they will give there opinion and not anybody's else
- ❖ How are you going to conduct volunteers??
ask a teacher from each class and let them pick a boy and a girl to be interviewed
- ❖ Where????
jimmy sirrel room

THIS INFOMATION IS FOR [REDACTED] MR JONES, [REDACTED] AND
[REDACTED] ONLY!!!

Interview questions!!!

1. DO YOU LIKE OUR PLAY GROUND? WHY?
2. IS THERE ENOUGH EQUIPMENT IN THE PLAY GROUND? IF NOT WHY?
3. DO YOU LIKE OUR BANK? WHY?
4. IS THERE ANY THINK YOU WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE IN THE PLAY GROUND? WHAT?
5. IS THERE ANY THINK YOU WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE ON THE BANK?
6. WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURT THING IN THE PLAY GROUND?
7. WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURT THING IN THE BANK
8. WHAT DO YOU PLAY ON THE PLAY GROUND
9. WHAT DO YOU PLAY ON THE BANK
10. DO YOU LIKE THE IDEA OF AN ADVENCHER COURSE ON THE BIT OF GRASS NEXT TO THE BASKET BALL COURT? WHY?
11. THANK YOU FOR TAKING YOUR TIME TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS ... GOOD BYE!!!

Dear interviewee,

Today I will be asking you some simple questions thank you for your time!

These questions will be yes or no questions but some of them will "or why" questions!!!

These questions will be about the playground and why you like it or dislike it please answer the following!!!



Thank you for your time today we will might consider some of your answers

BYE !!!!!!!

Appendix 6: Observation group - tables

Activities tally chart

Activities					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Football					
Wobble board					
Skipping					
Hula Hoops					
Basketball					
Quiet area					

(Blanks were left to fill in other activities)

Equipment use chart

Used	Partly Used	Not Used
Quiet area	Hula hoops	Skipping
Wall	Basketball	
Football		

(Equipment was listed as to the children’s view of how it was used)